# The Novels of Richard Pryce

Christopher
Jezebel
The Burden of a Woman
Elementary Jane

# JEZEBEL

## By RICHARD PRYCE

Set down a Jezebel in the midst of quiet, tradition-loving English country society, and the lady is like to make trouble and encounter difficulties.

The story of Jezebel is a convincing, fascinating exposition of what there is in a name. If she had been called Jessica — well, if she had been called Jessica, there might not have been any story about her. But Jezebel! "It was an assertion, a challenge, a blow in the face." And through it all Jezebel is just a spirited, lovable English girl, who could not be a scarlet woman when she tried, and who finally through her charm and sheer force of character breaks through the fog of speculation and suspicion that surrounds her and takes her rightful place in the circle to which she was born.

Jezebel is a glorious, compelling character. She redeems her name as she redeems the position of her family, and he is prejudiced indeed who can resist her winsomeness.

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# RICHARD PRYCE

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## By Richard Pryce

CHRISTOPHER.
JEZEBEL.
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THE BURDEN OF A WOMAN.

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

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BY

RICHARD PRYCE

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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# THE FIRST BOOK OF JEZEBEL

# JEZEBEL

## BOOK THE FIRST

### CHAPTER I

TOWARDS three o'clock on a Sunday in February some years ago (how many does not matter), the churchyard of a certain village, known as Hinton Dormoral, wore a look of considerable animation.

Groups of people stood here and there amongst the yews and the slanting gravestones. Women, in the sober bravery of their best, chattered awhile in the precincts of the church before passing with a discreet change of expression through the doorway into the building. Even within, and the somewhat chastened mien assumed, that was held meet for all exercises of religion, their faces did not wholly lose an alertness indicative of people come out for to see. Ploughmen and labourers, with the sheepish smile of hob-nailed intelligence, and the knotted and ungainly movements inevitable, it would seem, to the bodies of those whose lives are spent in work in the fields, loitered on the polished walks. A yokel or two, lighter than the rest, swung loose legs from a flat tombstone. Girls, with bright ribands in their hats, in couples with linked arms, or threes linked also, or separately, made their way desultorily towards the door, with many a giggling pause for meeting, parrying, or rebutting bucolic sallies.

The five bells which constituted the peal that, on still evenings, could be heard in distant Ettram, and even, with the wind in the right direction, in further Uncton, rang out lustily on the air. People ever approached : old

Meridew of the shop, the postmaster and his daughter, the landlord of the George the Fourth, and many more.

Now the peal ceased and was succeeded by the hurried clanging of a single bell, which was known in the neighbourhood as the Bustle-up, and for the sounding of which the more procrastinating of the parishioners were commonly reported to wait before getting ready for church.

For the next five minutes there was a little anticipative delaying. People looked this way and that. Then one said to another that They could not be coming yet, but must mean to bring It in the middle; which view, whatever it referred to, seemed to meet with general acceptance, for the paths and the porch emptied themselves into the building forthwith.

The interior was crowded already. The Church must flourish, a stranger would have said, in that part of the world, unless he had divined that the occasion was of unusual significance. The intelligent stranger, observing the signs of the moment, the flutter, the whispering, and turning of heads, would so have divined — or I think it.

The congregation, such of it as had waited to the last before coming in, was taking its place, or what places were left. A couple of clodhoppers entering a pew filled already to fulness, but entering it none the less, and with a pig-headed stolidness that stultified protest, caused three of the little boys with which it was stocked to bubble up like liquid breaking to a boil, and a few seconds of unexampled confusion reigned there till, the surplus occupants being eliminated by the sexton, order was restored. Circumstances, seldom just to the innocent, caused three unoffending and indignant little boys to be separated and deposited here and there amongst the other pews. Then a young girl walked up the middle aisle scanning the rows for a vacancy, but, becoming self-conscious and red, fled precipitately to the rear; there, sensible of the nudges and titters of

her fellows, to stand with hot eyelids, till a pewholder, seeing her shyness, made way for her in his own seat.

The choir were in their places : half a dozen maids and matrons, ranging from sixteen to sixty ; half a dozen shrill-voiced boys, the pick of the shrill-voiced school ; as many youths, of motley form and habit, and some half-dozen men. The organ pealed now in place of the bells. This, played by a pupil-teacher of musical ambition (in the absence of his superior, who was ill), had its effect somewhat marred by a tendency upon the part of the performer's ambitious feet to cover more pedals than was strictly needful or intended.

The service began.

The attention of the congregation divided itself between the door and a certain square pew, railed off and curtained. It beheld no one as yet, but that occupants were expected was obvious from the looks that were directed thither and thence towards the door.

Lamps were burning (brass oil lamps, that hung from beams by chains) ; for though the days were lengthening so that one of meagre conversation meeting another at dusk might say, " The days begin to draw out," such a stretch of daylight had not yet been reached as to admit of the whole afternoon service being performed before evening closed in. It was still daylight, however, and the lamps looked like stars in the nave and chancel.

Bethesda Meridew, who had walked up the aisle to be overcome with confusion (and through whose eyes it may serve us here to view the scene), had so far recovered her self-possession by the end of the Confession as to be able to take account of her surroundings. When she lifted her cooling eyelids she saw that the exhibition she had made of herself (deeming all eyes to have been upon her) had had such fortunate issue as that she found herself sitting in the pew most to be coveted in the whole church — the pew nearest to the font. Without behaving in any way

that was unseemly (for this reason we choose her our medium), she would be able to hear and to see all that took place at the baptism, to be present at which the whole country-side had turned out. For once what she called her Bashfulness had stood her in good stead.

The discovery raised her spirits at once. After all, it was only Bessy Wilson and Jane Matthews and Polly Ash who had nudged each other and laughed at her discomfiture. No one would see better than she. As she rejoiced she joined in the psalms with vigour. The seventy-eighth is abundantly graphic and gave the organist opportunities for descriptive treatment which, as an amateur, he was neither able to resist nor exploit to advantage.

"*He turned their waters into blood,*" sang the choir, "*so that they might not dri-ink of the rivers.*"

(Little Mr. Mason's cascades were recognizable.)

"*He sent lice among them and devoured them up and fro-ogs to destroy them.*"

(But the frogs in the organ were too much for it — or one of the basses said so to a tenor afterwards, instancing for analogy the Caterpillars Innumerable of a recent occasion also descriptive — and Mr. Mason's feet covered half the pedals.)

It was at this moment that the event to which all had been looking occurred, and upon the organist's ambitious floundering there entered my lord and my lady, a nurse with the precious baby, my lord's sister and a gentleman; which persons, escorted by the sexton, and with much rustling moved up to the curtained pew — my lord (gout was on him) grunting audibly as he hobbled on his two sticks, and throwing, it is said, a look of wrath towards the organ loft, where, though the choir by habit sang sturdily on, the ambitious pupil-teacher was still enmeshed in false chords.

Every head turned as the little big-people of the neighbourhood made their entrance. After the baby in its long

white robes Lady Dormoral attracted most attention, and, looking at her pale face, the women thought she had made but a poor recovery. His lordship looked much as usual, handsome, cynical, whimsical, overbearing ; Miss Dexter, his sister, as masterful as she had the reputation for being ; and afterwards it was said that both she and her brother, standing up by reason of their commanding height above the red curtain of the pew that hid the nurse and her ladyship wholly from view looked upon that day as if they shared a grim joke to which voice should be presently given. The remaining member of the party was young Mr. Riversley, her ladyship's cousin. More than one present, watching him as he walked up the aisle behind her, must have thought how much more fitting it would have been for him to be her husband than the old man whose name she bore.

The psalms came to an end and the first lesson. It may be gossip and so an idle tale (though the curtains were drawn by then) that at the beginning of the Magnificat or Song, as the Prayer-Book has it, of the Blessed Virgin, my lord was heard to whisper to my lady, "Sing up, my dear, sing up." This may be gossip, I say, but so rumour has it, or had.

The canticle came to an end and the second lesson. Then was the move made for the font. It is said (but here gossip may speak once again, and I vouch not for anything gossip may say, nor for the truth of reports having origin possibly in the decorations with which people delight to embellish facts be they never so ample) that a look passed between Lady Dormoral and her cousin as they walked down the aisle. The look has even been described as compounded of pleading and regret upon the one part, and, upon the other, of a sort of protest mingled with resignation to the inevitable.

The group ranged itself at the font and the baptismal service began. Bethesda Meridew from her place close at

hand heard and saw all that passed with vivid distinctness. She stared, open-mouthed it is probable, at the fortunate and happy people who came from the great house in the park, and thought of the heritage in store for that little bundle of pink life in its rich christening robes. Lady Dormoral was so near to her that she could have touched her velvets and laces, and Bethesda was surprised to see how a feather in her hat was trembling. Were great people shy too? Most extraordinary! The handkerchief her ladyship was holding (it was like cobweb or gossamer and smelled of fresh violets) was trembling as well as the feather, and the leaves of her prayer-book seemed to present insuperable obstacles to her slender fingers as they sought their way amongst them to the page she desired to find. Lord Dormoral observed her difficulty and took the book from her hand, but not to seek the place in it for her himself nor to exchange it for his own square book with the big big print. "Your eyes are younger than mine," Bethesda heard him say, as he handed his wife's prayer-book (a ridiculous little missal, as I beg to concede, and the size and shape of your thumb!) to her cousin, who took it in silence.

It was some moments before Mr. Riversley was able to hand it back to its owner nor did he look at her as he did so.

Lord Dormoral followed the service with twinkling attention. A rimmed glass hung round his neck, but he had no occasion to use it. The nurse rocked the sleeping infant in her arms, jerking herself slightly from the foot, so that the toe of one foot and the heel of the other divided the movement between them. Miss Dexter at first had separated her sister-in-law and her sister-in-law's cousin in the arrangement of the group. Now for no reason apparent she shifted her place to the other side of her brother. Lady Dormoral and young Mr. Riversley stood thus side by side, and were flanked by the nurse on the one hand

and the parson on the other. Any one would have apportioned partners in the way that the pairs were now standing. Miss Dexter's face held somewhere a twinkle, yet her eyes dark as night, like her brother's, were of the kind that is or that was described "piercing"; and Bethesda Meridew never failed to quail before them, when they met hers and saw down through them into her boots, whither, driving it in front of them as beaters drive birds, they hurried her fluttering heart. Resolute, capable, perverse, and with much that spoke humour, her face was her brother's without the notable handsomeness that distinguished the features of his. Yet in her youth she had had beauty enough, or enough of the charm that is nameless, to give her her conquests like others, and even let scandal go play round her name.

By the force of their strong personalities and not by their height alone, the brother and sister dominated the group. In stature young Mr. Riversley stood up to them. In what is called power he fell short of either. Yet the face that was showing ill temper just then, or arrogance of sorts, was by no means a weak one, nor was the intelligence it bespoke to be lightly passed over. Something was lacking for all that — not beauty. In cleanness of outline and fineness of grain, in clearness of eye and finish of lip, there were "looks" and to spare.

Gradually the light that fell from the stained windows was waning and the light of the lamps was asserting itself, so that the lamps looked less like stars. Bethesda Meridew was vaguely conscious of this and of many small things that were subservient to the interest of the group at the font. The church itself, which had never before, so she thought, looked quite as it looked on that day, nor would ever, she held, look the same in the future, seemed, with its mystery and its slanting pillars, to be existent only in order to form a background to the christening party; and the people that thronged the pews and craned their necks

to obtain a view of the ceremony had their part in life only as accessories to that which they had assembled to see. Bethesda started when one of the school children dropped a marble, which rolled, after a series of staccato hops on the stone floor, almost to her ladyship's feet. The boys shuffled in their seats in the north transept. Some one at hand was eating peppermints. An old man blew his nose with much trumpeting and a red pocket-handkerchief.

Now came the tense moment.

The parson held out his hands for the baby. The nurse transferred her sacred charge from herself to him with somewhat ostentatious solicitude for its welfare. Mr. Barnstaple's expression said mildly, "There, there, my good woman, have no fear. I will not hurt it, believe me. I have handled an infant before," and he took the child, she must have conceded, in a thoroughly workmanlike manner. She was a comparative stranger at that time and hailed from London or she would have known that the parson of Hinton Dormoral was noted for a weakness for babies that was almost maternal. He beamed through his benevolent spectacles at the little pink face and thence towards the god-parents.

Lord Dormoral put a finger and thumb into a pocket in his waistcoat, and after fumbling there for a moment produced a slip of paper, which he unfolded.

"Name this child," said the clergyman.

He looked over the rims of his spectacles, then, towards the god-parents comprehensively. His cheeks were like rosy apples wrinkled.

Lady Dormoral looked at her husband, the feather in her hat trembling more than before. Lord Dormoral handed her the slip of paper.

It is not, perhaps, an unusual thing for the parents and god-parents of a child to find themselves in the church, possibly even at the font itself, without having come to a definite decision as to the name to be finally given, and

many a whispered colloquy has there taken place between the hot and the flustered ere the question 's been settled; but assuredly, or most people thought so, the procedure at this particular christening was not normal. It became manifest to all, who were near enough to see and to hear what was passing, that Lady Dormoral, with the pale face and the trembling feather, had been told by her autocratic husband that at the proper time he would intimate to her the name or the names he had chosen, and that it was thus by prearrangement that he now held out to her the slip of paper. It was known that Lord Dormoral was "odd" to the limit of oddness, and also that his gentle young wife with the pale face, the trembling feather (others besides Bethesda could now see its trembling), and no backbone to speak of, who was a mother for the first time after six years of married life, could scarce call her soul her own. All this was known and well known. Lord Dormoral was not a man to take women, his sister excepted, into his consultations at all. Women were women, he held; just that and no more, and only excluded Miss Dexter from a classification which, as he meant it, was sweeping and not complimentary, on the ground that nature had made a mistake in her sex. She was hardly a woman at all.

There was a brief pause as Lady Dormoral took the bit of paper from her husband's hand. The sleeping child did not move in Mr. Barnstaple's arms. Its behaviour was exemplary. The nurse, of nervousness it is more likely than of pottering officiousness, took this opportunity of whispering audibly, "Not immersion, sir, be sure," as if anything so barbarous could be contemplated. Mr. Barnstaple beamed, "Very well, very well. Leave it to me, my good woman"; and waited.

Lady Dormoral, prepared possibly for some painful surprise, but not wholly prepared, it would seem, checked an exclamation as her eyes fell on what was written upon

the paper. She grew very white and the paper slipped from her fingers.

Miss Dexter anticipated young Mr. Riversley in recovering it as it fluttered towards the ground — which it had not reached, indeed, when she caught it. (Bethesda was reminded of a bird and a butterfly.) Young Mr. Riversley did not smile.

Mr. Barnstaple looked from one to another, and repeated the words ordained by the Church :—

"'Name this child.'"

Lady Dormoral made a movement forward and touched her husband's arm. "No, Edward, no," she whispered.

Her agitation, which, by the trembling feather, had shown itself from the beginning of the service, whatever its cause, had increased. It communicated itself to Bethesda, who held her breath. Young Mr. Riversley fixed his eyes on his prayer-book. He had braced himself to a disagreeable task one would have said, and meant to go through with it, be its developments what they might. Lady Dormoral looked towards him, as if for a moment there was in her mind a thought of appealing to him. But he did not look up. There was some answer perhaps in his unanswering attitude. Bethesda felt herself hating him, and— oh, Lord ! but most capable of loving him too ! and what in the world did it mean ?

Lady Dormoral glanced round, almost one would have said to seek escape with a primitive instinct of self-preservation, and then, as she saw herself hemmed in and at bay, or acknowledged the merciless strength of her foe, she made an effort that must have been supreme and recovered her self-possession.

She leant towards her sister-in-law, the second godmother, she herself standing proxy for the first, and spoke bravely. "Name her," she said. "Do it, you. Give her the name that her father has chosen.

## CHAPTER II

Miss Dexter complied without pressing (there were wheels within wheels), and seemed, having spoken, to smack her lips richly.

An audible sound went round the church. Bethesda saw Mr. Riversley's hand tighten upon his book. He looked at Lord Dormoral, and Bethesda tried hard to see his face, but could not just then by reason of his position and hers.

Mr. Barnstaple seemed to believe he had not heard aright.

Lord Dormoral repeated the name, giving each of its syllables value as full as might be.

Something like terror and more than dismay seized the clergyman.

"Oh!" he said, and "Oh!" in a breathless whisper; and again "Oh!" and "Do you realize . . .?"

Lord Dormoral cut him short with an "Everything," shortly. The mild little parson from red turned to white. It was he now who was agitated, not Lady Dormoral. She, poor lady, having gained the mastery of herself, stood restrainedly by. Young Mr. Riversley's attitude was not to be construed — by Bethesda, at all events. His back, with its beautiful lines, was a thing to remember.

Mr. Barnstaple attempted to reason. One could see that he thought of refusing. He was timid, however, and Lord Dormoral strong. Lord Dormoral's "By God, sir, am I or are you . . .?" (the person to name the child, well understood) took all the strength out of him. He hesitated, and was lost. To the day of his death he would think (and he thinks) that he failed in his duty to the Church of which he was a member, and to the Almighty whose servant he was and whose name he heard taken

in vain so profanely, when he quailed beneath Lord Dormoral's menacing presence (was there a laugh somewhere in his wrath? Was there? was there? And was the whole thing but a terrible jest?), and continued, albeit so fearfully, the interrupted service. There was some one else who looked, by his back, as if he too would have liked to protest, and who, it might be, was kept silent by a sense of decency, a horror of scenes, or the conviction that nothing now mattered. Be which as it may be, he was silent, but kept his hands clenched on his prayer-book.

Mr. Barnstaple's voice shook as he pronounced the fateful word. Tears in his benignant eyes, he looked down with pity at the sleeping child.

"Jezebel, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

"Amen," said Lord Dormoral.

"Amen," said Miss Dexter.

Then the baptismal service proceeded to its conclusion, when Lord Dormoral, Miss Dexter, and young Mr. Riversley returned to the square and curtained pew (where the curtains were furled and the three were not hidden), and Lady Dormoral, the nurse, and the sleeping Jezebel left the church.

The congregation, it may be supposed, was in a state of excitement hardly to be restrained. A sound of whispering was to be heard on more sides than one. People at a distance exchanged significant looks, and friends in a pew put their heads together. The school children, fidgeting in their places, talked audibly, and were reproved from time to time. The light of the lamps grew stronger.

Mr. Barnstaple's sermon that afternoon was shorter than usual. It was conjectured that, when he fumbled at a certain point with the pages on which it was written, he turned over several for one. Nobody present was grieved at such curtailment, if indeed it took place, for all itched to be free to let their tongues wag. In that outly-

ing district there happened so little to break the monotony of days, that were each one like that which had gone by the same name in the preceding week, that the events of this February afternoon would provide matter for talk for many a long year. The very aspect of the church spoke to the dulness of a neighbourhood in which a mere baptism was enough to bring people together in such numbers.

Hence the scandal was a godsend.

The carriage from the castle was waiting outside when the congregation began to emerge from the church. All eyes were on the christening party as they came down the aisle. Young Mr. Riversley's face was seen to be a face of thunder.

At the door hats were touched and curtseys dropped. Miss Dexter smiled and was gracious in a brusque way.

"Remember, Lord Dormoral expects you all up at the castle for the rejoicings on Wednesday," she said.

Lord Dormoral, who waited for nobody, had walked down the path. He got into the carriage without waiting for his sister to take her place. She followed now.

Young Mr. Riversley stood back.

"I am not coming with you," he said.

"As you like," said Miss Dexter; "but there's plenty of room."

"I think not," said young Mr. Riversley.

It had been growing dark in the church but outside there was considerable daylight left. A gentle air, not without a hint of spring in it, was stirring, and the gauntness of trees was softened by a friendly sky.

The carriage drove off.

Then young Mr. Riversley, appearing to become conscious that he was an object of interest and curiosity to the groups of people who hung about the churchyard, left it abruptly. No sooner was he, the last of the christening party, gone, than the spot was the theatre of a parliament. All that had hitherto been simmering in a hundred heads

had to be drawn off in speech. Never had Hinton Dormoral witnessed such "talkation." Class distinctions were ignored for the occasion, as in times of pestilence or public jubilation or national disaster. The lion hobnobbed with the lamb; the bird of paradise with the common sparrow; the whale with the minnow. The "spectacle" Bethesda Meridew had made of herself earlier in the afternoon was forgotten in the interest that attached to her by reason of her recent propinquity to the font. Bessy Wilson, Jane Matthews, and Polly Ash pressed round her.

Mr. Barnstaple emerged from the vestry, leaving the church by the side door. He threaded his course somewhat hurriedly through the groups of lingering people, and, avoiding conversation with any who might have thought to waylay him, he disappeared down the path that led to the Rectory. Many pairs of eyes followed him to the bend at which he was hidden from view. He held his head low, and even his coat-tails were eloquent of the disturbed state of his mind.

"Jezebel!" said one and another; "Jezebel!"

Daniel Harbury of the George the Fourth said, "The Honourable Jezebel Dexter!" as if to gauge the full enormity of the thing, and wondered aloud what her ladyship's name was.

Old Enoch Meridew, Bethesda's grandfather, was in a position to tell him. He kept the village shop and knew her ladyship's cheque.

"Purity," he said. Whereupon some one gave a low whistle which the landlady of the Post-Chaise and Compasses, one Mrs. Bence, Daniel Harbury's rival in business, misapprehended altogether. The name Purity might seem strange, too, but she was able to tell, having a cousin herself married to a gentleman in Broad Street, London, E.C., a silk merchant, that the Brakspears, from which family her ladyship came, being the last of it as orphan niece of Mr. David Brakspear, since dead, of the late firm

of Brakspear, Ogden & Twain, were of Puritan stock. Many of the old City firms, she averred, were "religious like that." Some, she believed, were still Quakers.

Her lengthy explanation, however, and the word she had used as a woman of a little culture, conveyed nothing to her hearers. Moreover, she had misunderstood the whistle of Jerry Mitson, the horse-dealer, who straightway proceeded to make himself clear in the terms of his calling.

"Jezebel," he said, with a wink and a grin, "Jezebel, out of Purity by —"

"Tssh! For shame to you," cried the Post-Chaise and Compasses.

The George the Fourth laughed.

That was a good 'n, he held.

Mrs. Mortimer of the Brook Farm, and a tenant, said it was for shame to his lordship. She said a "naspersium" had that day been put on his lady's good name, and for shame to him.

Jerry Mitson was only the foremost or one of the foremost to put into words the inference which every one had drawn or was drawing. By some, an unseemly levity had been suspected (and that was all) of Lord Dormoral's intention, for levity with lawlessness ran in the blood. Lord Dormoral had neither reverence nor "seemliness" and would have been quite capable of calling a daughter Jezebel for mere caprice. There were whispers, moreover, that made it seem probable that aggrievance at the sex of his child might have had its part in suggesting, to one who looked for an heir and was godless, a sinister jest of this kind. Jezebel in that case was just the protest he flung at the object of his disappointment. But by the more "knowing" a graver intent was supposed, and it is certain that the juxtaposition of the names Purity and Jezebel added weight to what promoted such conjecture.

A woman or two was in arms for her sex. Mrs. Morti-

mer repeated For Shame to his lordship. The thing was not true, and "besides" if it was, it would just serve him right and For Shame to him tenfold. Let all who heard mark her words. It would be *his* fault if aught now went wrong at the Castle — his and his only. She was herself a good woman, wife and mother these twenty years, but, by gosh and by gum, if she was her ladyship, after what had happened that day she 'd give the old gentleman something to talk about, see if she would n't. And young Mr. Riversley such a nice, upstanding young gentleman!

"Ah," she said, with a twist of her head when Daniel Harbury applauded her; "would n't I, that 's all!"

Others, women, agreed with her. Mrs. Bence shook her head. The reasoning was a trifle involved. There was some clamouring, however, against his lordship, whose ongoings in his youth had been scandalous. Hinton Dormoral had never had a good name — least of all since the days of Mad Dormoral, his grandfather, whose doings and those of his son were still chronicled, and whose pranks with his familiars, who called themselves "Dormoral's dare-devils," were the bane and fear of the country. Tradition would tell you his elegant hands (the delicate hands of a woman, you would say, if the wax cast of a hand that lies under glass with the treasures in the armoury be really his) were twice stained with blood in encounters with those who mistook his wild deeds for rank outrage. Blood-stained or not, he lies in the vault twenty yards from the font, and he sleeps with his fathers. Some of the poison such as runs in all well-seasoned veins was drawn off in him, but not all of it. There had been "doings" up at the Castle within people's memories. Even now, with Lord Dormoral old and Miss Dexter in her pepper-and-salt, were things quite as they should be? Were there prayers for the family? Was the Sabbath regarded, or were cards put away on that night? Was not the library stored with heathenish books? Joseph Corrit, of the head farm and

an elder (the Corrits were chapel folk) had read the names of some of them upon a day, and had had opportunity, in the temporary absence of his lordship, of dipping into the contents of one or two to assure himself of their brimstone heresies. Why, one of them impugned the veracity of the account of the creation in Genesis! Such blasphemy was said to be Lord Dormoral's favourite study. It was seldom that he put in an appearance, as to-day, at a place of divine worship. Scoffer and infidel!

Mrs. Mortimer, in defending her sex, remembered Miss Dexter.

"She's the old lord in petticoats," she said, "and they're both of 'em leagued with the Devil. The poor young thing —I allude to her ladyship — it goes to my heart to think of her boxed up with 'em."

Some one said something would come of that afternoon's doings.

"If it's leaving him you mean," said indignant Mrs. Mortimer, "I'm sure I hope she will.'

Mrs. Bence, who, from the Post-Chaise and Compasses, had buried two husbands, and never had a day's discomfort with either, said fie. She (Mrs. Bence) could not go as far as that, though she might echo shame to his lordship.

"I do," said Mrs. Mortimer stoutly, "God forgive me, I do."

On a mention of Wednesday's prospective rejoicings she burst into choler afresh. Rejoicings, indeed! It was perfect sacrifice, she averred (and may have meant sacrilege, for she went on to say that the word was profaned), and she at least would not go to them. "Unless," she added by way of a saving clause in case the temptation should prove too great for her — "unless I go for the sake of her ladyship."

Thus people talked and talked, and conjecture ran riot. Whatever, however, the facts of the case, Lord Dormoral's

insult was meant for his wife. So much was certain. Pity for her was universal; belief in her innocence not rare.

What took place at the Castle will never be known in full detail, but the main facts were soon forthcoming and the outcome of the affair was common property before the day was older by many hours.

That a stormy interview — stormy, that is, on the one part — took place between young Mr. Riversley and Lord Dormoral is certain, for the second footman and one of the housemaids heard a word or two of what was spoken, and would have heard more but that the butler, John Buckram (a terrible person), discovered them and routed them out of their coign of vantage — the space between the outer and inner doors of the library, where they had ensconced themselves comfortably to listen. One thing, however, they did hear before the terrible Buckram (terrible, partly by reason of his wife's position as housekeeper and controller of the household at Hinton Dormoral) came to disturb them.

"Young Mr. Riversley he upped and he says to his lordship" (to give James Cleary's own words) — "'You dared to ask me here,' he says, 'and to insist on my standing the child's godfather while you thought I was Pussy's lover' — that 's the name her ladyship goes by in the family — 'by God,' he says, 'if it was n't for your age I 'd horsewhip you.' His lordship laughed. 'Tell Pussy,' he says, 'tell Pussy if she 'd given me a boy his name had been mine.'"

It was here that Buckram interrupted his eavesdropping.

But what every one knew was that at about seven o'clock that evening young Mr. Riversley walked down openly to the George the Fourth and asked for Daniel Harbury's dogcart. He was flushed, it was said, and his eyes were very bright; but he was perfectly calm, and he had a glass of whiskey and water in the bar parlour while he waited for the mare to come round. It was only when

some minutes had passed, ten, perhaps, that he showed signs of impatience and looked at his watch.

"Sorry to keep you, sir," Daniel Harbury said more than once, and explained that the mare was in the paddock and was a hard one to catch. She appeared at last and was fresh at the starting.

All who were present were agape and abristle with curiosity as to what young Mr. Riversley wanted the cart for till the moment when, as he came out on the steps of the inn, he handed what looked like a sovereign (and was) to the landlord, saying something about short debts and long friends.

"Long friends I hope, sir," said Daniel, "but there'll be change out of this."

"No matter," said young Mr. Riversley. "But the mare'll come back to you safe, though it may n't be to-night."

There was little doubt then what the dogcart was wanted for.

Daniel seemed to hesitate.

"No fear about that, sir. Young sir, I ask your pardon . . . I'm old and you're — you're both of you young, with all due respect, sir. I'm fearing, I'm fearing. . . . Have you thought, sir? Two wrongs never yet made a right."

Young Mr. Riversley flushed more deeply. For a moment he looked like answering hotly. Then he lowered his head for a moment as short, when he seemed to pull himself together.

"It's no time to look back," he cried, and he sprang to his seat. "But I've thought, Daniel Harbury, make your mind easy on that. Good-bye, all of you, for here I drive out of your lives."

At a nod from him the ostler stood away from the animal's head and young Mr. Riversley waved farewell with his whip.

"So they 're off!" said the George.

The Post-Chaise and Compasses had put on its bonnet and was here with a fie, and a fie, and a fie.

"I said what I could," said the George.

"And lent 'em your cart to go off in," the Post-Chaise and Compasses answered.

Twenty minutes later every one knew that a light valise and a veiled figure had been picked up on the road, and that down-trodden and misunderstood Lady Dormoral (or shall we who are soon to know better say, down-trodden because misunderstanding?) had for once in her life made her mind up and succeeded in screwing her courage to the sticking-point.

## CHAPTER III

JEZEBEL lay at Hinton Dormoral. She was out of the fuss and the flurry; elopements might take place, tears and repentances possibly supervening (though perhaps it was relief, and unqualified, that supervened, nor any misgiving just then!), divorces pend, neighbourhoods be agog, wars come and rumours of wars, of famines, or earthquakes, or plagues; her peace was unshaken.

Her cradle was the centre of a little universe of its own. Round her other bodies revolved — such bodies, it must here be admitted, the bodies of servants for the most part, from that of her direct satellite Mrs. Weston the nurse to that of Bella the housemaid who had eavesdropped with the second footman. Even the cook panted up the back stairs at intervals to visit the nursery — a body most moon-like, the cook's. Nor must I forget that from time to time Miss Dexter flashed in like a meteor.

Lord Dormoral sat in the library and saw lawyers from London.

The kitchen was never empty. There Mrs. Rumbold received (she who panted); and there was there talking unended. Every one who came to the door sooner or later came in and sat down.

"Dear heart alive, what do you think of it all, Mrs. This?" or "Sakes, here's a kettle of fish, Mr. That, how's it strike you?"

Only when Buckram was by was conversation strained. John Buckram himself was laconic and had, with his wife, the ear of his master too nearly for popularity. The other servants feared him.

When the beauty of Jezebel was exploited at this time (as if babies had beauty or differed much one from another!),

some sitting in the great kitchen wondered that the child had been left. "But it's his," said Mrs. Rumbold, and here, moreover, was the whispered thing to be told. Mrs. Rumbold herself in speaking of it always lowered her voice. My lord had been heard more than once to demand a boy of her ladyship (poor put-upon creature): "Give me a son, do you hear, a son, a son! Set your mind on male children and don't let a thought of a girl cross your brain!" Words such as these were in his command and his menace. There was a joke somewhere, but blest if her poor timid ladyship saw it! So the birth of a daughter was not the beginning but the culminating point of her sorrows, and the wonder was small if she showed little love for her infant.

"There's maternity in all of us," said Mrs. Rumbold, who taking brevet rank (living in the best houses), was "Mrs." by courtesy only, "and we was all of us meant to be mothers, we women; but her ladyship, poor thing, had the mother-love killed in her, dead." Mrs. Rumbold further added, "I blame her in nothing."

In the stables the outdoor servants congregated and discussed matters as freely. They all had their views, and said "H'm" and said "H'm." They spoke of young Mr. Riversley with a wink and a glance from the tail of an eye, and all of them praised him; his looks, and his manners, his hand with a horse. But hats were not the less respectfully touched to Lord Dormoral. One and all had a sort of pride in his eccentricity. Who was like him? Did he not shirk all that might be expected of his position? He laid no foundation stones, opened no buildings in Uncton or Ettram, addressed no meetings, was not a Justice of the Peace nor on the Board of Guardians at the Union; had been rude to most people in his time, and was now the last of the Dormorals.

Miss Dexter came and went much as usual. She had now undivided sway at Hinton Dormoral as in the days

before her brother's marriage. The gentle Lady Dormoral had not interfered very greatly with her despotism, but apparently her resumption of the full reins of office was not ungrateful to her, and it was patent to all who saw her that she was not making herself unhappy over the scandal. She appeared in church on the following Sunday as if nothing had happened, and did not even take the trouble to draw the curtains round the big pew in which she sat alone. Why they were not already drawn round it an inquisitive and early church-goer could probably have told her. The sexton assuredly had left them veiling the seats as usual before going to ring the bell, but Mrs. Mortimer was in her place (and out of it) soon after half-past ten that morning.

The rejoicings, it should be told, had not taken place. Instead there was the elopement to talk of. Mr. Barnstaple had been half expected to touch upon recent events in his sermon, as he did at times of political crises, royal illnesses or deaths or marriages and the like, but, preaching on a text from the epistle for the day, he dealt with matters of doctrine only and did not refer even distantly to what the week had brought forth. He was thought to look "shaken," however, as one who has sustained a shock.

He had gone up to the Castle, it was known, on the day following the christening, but it was not thought that his religious exhortations had met with any welcome. Lord Dormoral's attitude, it was probable, pained but scarcely surprised him. Yet, perhaps, if the truth were known the old peer was not so unmoved by what had happened as was commonly supposed. It might be that for once he had over-reached himself, and realized the extent of such over-reaching. Certain it is that a sullenness, that was not normal to his masterful nature, fell upon him at this time and seemed to hold him in grip.

He went up to London when the divorce case came on

and returned at the end of the week. The servants and neighbours devoured the newspapers, but, the case being undefended, the reports were meagre. The local papers, with the exception of the radical organ, passed over the affair with a few reticent and respectful lines ; and it is to be feared that many good conservatives bought the "The Uncton Weekly News and Ettram Independent" that week, despite its lurid politics, for the issue went thrice to the press, and people who would not have the "scurrilous sheet" seen within their doors were found to be word perfect in the matter of the column to which the suit was expanded and the editor's comments thereon. In ale-houses and country inns thumbed copies of the journal were passed from one to the other. Rims left by glasses and pewter pots bore witness to such copies' circulation.

Not, be it said, that the radical paper had anything specially "seasoned" to tell. On the contrary, never was a divorce case more lacking in discreditable details ; the journal's bid for popularity rested only on the full report of such evidence as had been forthcoming and the devoting of a leader to the theme.

Still there was talk and talk and talk ; people said this and said that, and Jezebel lay unconcerned at Hinton Dormoral. At Hinton Dormoral, forsooth—Lord Dormoral, by all that was anomalous and paradoxical, having been given the custody of the child ! People smiled enquiringly and looked at each other. You couldn't be even with the queerness of things.

Lord Dormoral paid his charge scant attention. Jezebel, however, had all that she needed and more. She was pampered, indeed. She thrived none the less, and ere many months was, her nurse said, a marvellous child. She had hair inches long and as black as your coat or a raven. She had colour, too, red in her cheeks and her lips, and the rest of her was white and pink according

as it should be. She was strong as a lion's cub and as wilful as might be. Her lungs were as strong as her limbs, but she did n't cry much, though she could when she would, as even Lord Dormoral in the distant library could have testified. Her healthiness was extraordinary. She passed through her teething with the least possible number of sleepless nights for herself or her nurses, and developed scarcely any of the infantile maladies incident to her tender age. If Mrs. Weston is to be believed, she was an exceptional child altogether, taking notice before any other infant that ever was heard of, and holding out her hands towards the lamp at a time of life challenging question. Later, the lamp or the fire or any shining object still delighting her, she began to be attracted by colour. There were two blue vases in the nursery (Mrs. Weston's, and blue as the sky) that claimed her attention upon a day, and one of them had to be put into her hands. It is now stuck together with pieces of plaster and half a bottle of cement. There were roses of bright damask in the pattern of the wall paper, and these caused her to crow — crowing, she crowed freely, and jumped in the arms of her nurse. She rubbed her chubby hand on a blossom, said "G-r-r-r-r," or something as warm in approval, and danced again.

"Bless her," said Mrs. Weston as pleased; "bless her little heart and toes."

"G-r-r-r-r," Jezebel jerked out, transported; nor slobbered over-much. She was commendably clean and commendably dry in her habits.

She had two direct satellites. The dismissal of the lesser luminary, one Molly (for impudence to the greater, Mrs. Weston), set Mrs. Weston and Miss Dexter to their first joint discussion of any importance about the child and her needs. As the outcome of it, Miss Dexter girt up her loins and stalked down to the village. She made for the shop. She had noticed Bethesda some time for a fool

but a good girl, and the lot fell upon her. The girl held a nondescript place as help and grand-daughter and unpaid servant to old Enoch Meridew, who, having impressed upon her the burden she was on him, now refused point-blank to part with her. It was to be a tussle, was it? Miss Dexter straightened her back.

"There's lots of wenches," said Enoch; "there's Bessy Wilson up at Raff'th. Her father's got her on his hands, and there's Polly Ash —"

"Trollops," said Miss Dexter (or something as short and as long and more classical). "Trollops! See 'em giggling in church in their feathers and ribands. It's Bethesda I want; it's Bethesda I'll have, so I tell you."

The old man pulled a forelock (he had one, one only, and not a hair more from his brow to the fringe at his collar), and bowed. With all deference due he thought not.

Miss Dexter turned to Bethesda — upon her, almost, one might say.

"Do you want to come, child? Stand straight and speak up."

Bethesda, trembling and blushing and short of breath by reason of what she called, as we know, her bashfulness, said: —

"If you please, my lady, and if grandfather 'll let me."

She stammered, and Miss Dexter laughed out.

"Come," she said brusquely, "I'm not going to eat you, you need n't be scared. Nor, by the way, need you call me 'my lady.' Yet not 'miss,' for the Lord's sake, although I'm a spinster. Ma'am's what you'll call me, please — or 'mum' as you'll say it, slurring the *a* to a certainty. Remember, Bethesda, the well-bred servant says 'ma'am' to Mrs. and Miss alike."

The flustered Bethesda answered like one in a farce.

"Yes, miss," she said, "I mean ma'am — oh, my lady!"

"Still, you'll learn," said Miss Dexter, "and it does n't

much matter. When can she come, Mr. Meridew? I want her at once."

"Not at all, 'm," said Enoch. "She can't come."

Bethesda stood by changing colour. She felt conspicuous as she had felt when she made the "show" of herself in church.

"'Not at all!'" said Miss Dexter. "'Can't come!' The man's mad."

Enoch bowed most respectfully; said that might be, but he knew his own business.

"That's what you don't," said Miss Dexter, and talked till she knew that, though the old man pretended to hold to his refusal, she had virtually carried her point — as was proved the next day when Bethesda, blushing and frightened and happy and proud, presented herself at the Castle with her message.

Miss Dexter, having thus fought on Jezebel's account, began to show something of interest in the child, flashing into the nursery less like a meteor, and showing even a little inclination to revolve round her like the other bodies that moved in the Jezebelar system.

There was no diminution in the number of such bodies. Mrs. Rumbold still panted daily up the back stairs to worship at the infant's shrine, and most of the servants' friends at one time or another were smuggled up to the nursery for the same purpose. Jezebel, had she been able to understand half what was said in her hearing, would have learned that she was a remarkable being, indeed, and that she was an object of absorbing interest to the whole country-side.

But of visitors proper there was a notable absence just now at the Castle. The fresh scandal had revived, for the particular and the exclusive, something of the bad odour in which the couple of before-mentioned reprobates, father and son, in order (and disorder, for you could n't call at Hinton Dormoral or have any dealings therewith when

laxity ruled, and it held people it should not) preceding the reigning peer, had contrived to place it. Lord Dormoral himself, coming to his heritage before Hinton Dormoral had recovered their doings, had done little to retrieve the repute of his house. The days of uproarious misdemeanours were over then, and the new lord's sins in the eyes of his neighbours were of a less blatant type than those of his fathers, but he was a Dormoral for all that, and before he married, which he did late in life as we know, there had been sufficient goings-on at the Castle (Miss Dexter presumably lending them countenance and even giving rise to some talk on her own account) to prove that the stock was unchanged.

Neither Lord Dormoral nor his sister cared aught (tuppence, Miss Dexter's expression) for society, its claims or its privileges, its susceptibilities or its fiats, and their intimate friends in the neighbourhood were not many. They had very fine friends for all that, and could always fill the house with the exalted. Miss Dexter would n't be bothered. People had taken the trouble to call fairly often in Lady Dormoral's time, and had made efforts at friendliness to which the misunderstood and misunderstanding lady had responded gladly. But the position of the place, the extreme end, as every one said, of the county, made it easy to plead the excuse of distance when you did not wish particularly to go there, and found by your visiting-book that a long time had elapsed since last you drove in through the lodge gates at the foot of the park.

Jezebel and her nurse drove abroad now almost daily in the big barouche behind the Dormoral liveries of chocolate and white. Sometimes when they met other carriages the occupants of these would turn and look after them. Now and then as the vehicles were passing each other a lady would call hurriedly to her servant to stop and to signal a like request to the Dormoral coachman, and then Mrs. Weston would have the proud pleasure of displaying her

precious care to admiring eyes. Baby-worship invariably ensued and Mrs. Weston told wonderful tales.

Then the lady would kiss the little child, and, perhaps, as a sentimental organism, would look at the nurse and sigh, with a "Well, well!" or a "Poor little innocent soul!"

Mrs. Weston sometimes sighed too in response; but not always, for, with all that the baby could want supplied lavishly, there was left, or there seemed, small occasion for pity.

On the estate Jezebel in her perambulator soon made friends for herself. She was a welcome guest at such farms as lay within the scope of a morning's or afternoon's walk. Mrs. Mortimer must always take her from Mrs. Weston to hold her to her motherly bosom. Mrs. Bence of the Post-Chaise and Compasses vied with the mistress of The Brook in adulation.

Mr. Barnstaple at the Rectory must be visited at least once a week. His old apple cheeks never failed to glow when his gentle eyes espied the approach of the little maid and her attendants. The sermon had yet to be imagined and the book written or the occupation discovered that could not be abandoned temporarily at the sight of the white procession coming up the path: the perambulator first (this the order) propelled by the blushing Bethesda who thus came second, and was followed by the faithful Weston of the overseeing eye. Mr. Barnstaple was at the door almost before they reached it.

"Well, nurse, and how 's baby?" his formula—the right and proper one Mrs. Weston held it, and said so on the day when she was insulted on the high road by an impudent soldier who came perhaps from the barracks at Uncton, and reversed matters boldly with "Baby, how 's nurse?" "Impertinent fellow!" she called him in retrospect, "and 'Take no notice,' I says to Bethesda."

Jezebel had been less exclusive if the truth must be

told; his tunic had attracted her and she had crowed and said "Da da!" with all possible rapture and friendliness.

"That's right, my beauty," said the soldier, "keep a place in your heart for the red coats."

"'And you, sir,' I says to him, 'learn to address your betters respectfully and keep your advice for your equals.' — 'Then take it for yourself, miss,' he says, and he bows bold as brass to me, and turned on his 'eel. Saucy cattle!"

Mr. Barnstaple, by this time a firm friend of Weston's and ever a peacemaker and a smoother of all that was ruffled, said: "We must make allowance for those who have not been given such advantages as ourselves. He offended, perhaps, in ignorance, meaning no harm"; and changed the subject. "She grows, nurse, she grows famously. She does you credit."

Mrs. Weston bridled at once.

"There never," she said, "was one like her. And strong! She 's a handful to bath. Splash, sir? We have to use one of the biggest embroidered bath blankets. She loves her bath, she does, little precious, and she 's a sight for mothers-that-hope-to-be, bless her little fat legs. Mrs. Rumbold would n't miss it, sir, not if there was ten dinners to cook, and the stairs twice as high. She 's stout, Mrs. Rumbold, and short of breath, as I dare say you 've noticed. Baby takes to her wonderful, and she 's strong in her likes and dislikes. Mrs. Buckram she can't abear, which I 'm glad of — though, of course, sir, I know that we should n't hate any one. Still, there it is, and she 's got a little will of her own."

"May God guide it," Mr. Barnstaple murmured.

It was April at this time, fourteen months since the christening of Jezebel. There were bright yellow daffodils in the beds of the Rectory garden, and she stretched out her hands towards them. Mr. Barnstaple hastened to gather a bunch for her. Soft airs were stirring and all the trees reclad in green. Birds were singing. It was the time for

young things. Jezebel and Bethesda Meridew seemed in tune with the season.

"Lord Dormoral?" said Mr. Barnstaple after a pause. He had no need to frame his question more definitely.

"Not yet, sir; but Miss Dexter's her friend, though she never says 'Baby' or 'Dearie' or 'Darling,' but just 'Jezebel,' as hard as flint. She's her friend for all that and I've seen her eyes twinkle a time or two. 'Well,' she'll say, 'Jezebel, you little devil, and what have you got to say for yourself?' or 'Bethesda, you blushing dolt, bring me Miss Jezebel.' But she don't mean it unkind to the little unconscious any more than she does to Bethesda here."

Bethesda Meridew coloured, of course, and looked sheepish, but very pretty.

"You little silly, you," Mrs. Weston said to her good-naturedly and aside.

Jezebel shook her daffodils and screamed ecstatically.

"Look at that, now," said the nurse; "a picture I call it — don't you, sir? But wait, I say, wait. There's no hurry. We can get on without wrong-headed people just yet awhile, — can't we, my innocent? His lordship'll see his mistake if he has n't 'fore this. We can all of us wait till he does."

She looked at her watch and said that they must be moving.

"You'll go by the lane?"

"If the garden door's open, sir."

This was said every time that they called at the Rectory, and Mr. Barnstaple, fetching the key from its methodical place on a nail in one of the greenhouses, never failed to walk down with them to the door in question and unlock it himself; nor, leaving the door ajar, to accompany them as far as the foot of the hill where started the lane that presently entered the park by the way of the Home Farm.

Here Jezebel was told to say good-bye to the kind gentleman — an exercise as yet, but she learned to kiss her hand to him: her outstretched palm, that is, was spread once or twice over her nose and mouth, to which performance she occasionally added strange words.

Then would Mr. Barnstaple stand looking after the perambulator till it was hidden by the trees at the point where the lane turned sharply to the right, and go back to his sermon, or his book, or the accounts of the penny bank or of the men's club, shaking his head, perhaps, and murmuring like the sentimental lady (and the dear sentimental old woman he was himself): "Well, well," or, "Poor little Innocent."

## CHAPTER IV

People might shake their heads, sigh, pity, deplore as they would, Jezebel's early life was unclouded. Her vigorous health assured her her buoyant spirits ; her sturdiness increased ; her laughter rang out in the nursery and on the close-cropped lawns. Her fourth summer on earth was a period of especial well-being, and was marked by the event to which all who watched her and loved her were looking.

She was playing one day on the grass when Lord Dormoral was seen observing her from one of the library windows. So little notice was it his custom to bestow upon her, that the fact that he did not move from his place at the casement for some ten minutes arrested the nurse's attention as a thing that was richly significant, and she waited developments. She dissembled, however, pretending undivided concern with her charge, and threw the child's ball for her, nor wearied of picking it up. Jezebel screamed with delight, and threw with both hands and wild aim. Furtive looks towards the house showed Mrs. Weston an empty window.

Lord Dormoral often sat or walked in the gardens, but generally avoided such parts of them as the child and her nurse, or her nurses, might occupy. On this day, however, a few moments after Mrs. Weston had observed the window to be empty, Lord Dormoral appeared on the terrace and came towards the spot where she and Miss Jezebel were playing.

He looked on for some moments in silence ; then "Come here, Jezebel," he said.

Mrs. Weston stopped the ball as it came towards her.

"Go to his lordship," she said.

But Jezebel clamoured. An interruption of the game in progress was not at all to her taste. Mrs. Weston set her face to a signalling frown.

"Go to his lordship," she prompted.

"Come here, Jezebel," said Lord Dormoral again.

He had a deep voice that lent itself little to tenderness. Jezebel planted her feet wide apart without speaking. She was three and a bit, and had talked for more than a year and a half, adding to the language, when the age of a twelve-month, or little more, by calling her food "Abb'm Babb'm," her nurses "Didgy" and "Yoyo," and inventing many a word of strange etymology, as her baby tongue had need. But now having clamoured, she planted her feet wide apart and kept silence.

"Give me the ball," said my lord to the nurse, when the child did not move. "No; throw it to me. Stay where you are."

The ball fell short of the mark.

"I might have known that you could n't throw straight," said Lord Dormoral with a grunt, as he stooped for it. "Now, Jezebel, come to me."

Jezebel looked at him, having followed with her eyes the track of her toy. He held it towards her. She ran forward, changed her mind, and stood still.

Mrs. Weston made for her hand, with a "Come to your father, my precious."

Lord Dormoral waved her off.

"Be good enough," he said, but spoke quietly, "to stay where you are and to mind your own business. When I want you to bring the child to me I shall tell you. Jezebel!"

He held out the ball again; its bright colours shone in the sunlight.

Again Jezebel looked at him. Then she walked over to him boldly and asked for her own. It was in her hands in a moment.

Mrs. Weston had trembled for the issue, expecting to see the ball held high and the child in tears of rebellion.

When Jezebel held it she hesitated. She wanted playmates, it might be. She offered it back. Lord Dormoral took it and threw. She retrieved with a scream of delight.

"Let me look at you," he said.

There was a seat close at hand and he went over to it and sat down. The child followed him. There was not an ounce of fear in her nature.

"You can go," said his lordship over his shoulder to her nurse; who went, nothing loath, but watched from a distance, like Miriam, the sister of Moses the lawgiver, and many another. She was well pleased at the turn things were taking.

Jezebel was lifted on to Lord Dormoral's knee.

He looked at her intently. She returned his look unabashed, her big eyes scanning him solemnly. They were deep as his own, and her hair was so black that queens of Egypt could not have boasted locks blacker.

Jezebel was shown his watch, had it held to her ears, was told not to breathe, and was shown its inside. Delighted, she thrust out a plump little finger, touching a wheel. The watch stopped.

"I've a good mind to slap you for that," said Lord Dormoral. "I will, I think. There!"

Jezebel set up a yell, deliberated, came to the conclusion that she was not hurt, and laughed in his face. In laughing she displayed two rows of the whitest teeth possible.

"Damn you," he said, and he kissed her.

Presently she wriggled to be put down. Lord Dormoral did not detain her a moment after she wished to be free, but called Mrs. Weston and went back to the house. A week passed before he showed any further interest in her.

But, as Mrs. Weston said to Bethesda, the ice was broken, and Bethesda said Yes, with a long breath of

wonder. Half a dozen pairs of eyes had been witness to the scene on the lawn. The thing was discussed high and low.

Mrs. Rumbold gasped up to the nursery.

"Fancy that now," she said, and, "Just to think!" and summed up her contentment in "What did I tell you!"

Mrs. Weston recounted the tale of her dissembling.

"I've tried more than once," she declared, "to draw his attention to my lamb, wheeling the pram times and times under his very nose when he's sat on the lawn or the terrace, and he's not so much as looked up from his paper. So to-day I says to myself, 'Take no notice,' I says, just as I might 'a' done to Bethesda here, who was n't there, for I 'd sent her down to see her grandfather. 'Take no notice,' I says, 'and we shall see what we shall see.' For it was the first time as his lordship had put himself out of his way to stand at the window, to my certain knowledge, and look at his offspring (you know *my* view on that, Mrs. Rumbold), and I just pretended not to see him or be thinking of him at all, when out he comes. So it just shows."

Mrs. Rumbold agreed that it just showed, and said "Fancy" again.

Two of the housemaids came in to have their say. Martha had called Bella; Bella, James Cleary. Martha had said, "Well, I never," or something as original; Bella, "What-*ever* next," or the elegant like; and the footman had candidly owned himself damned; all of which had to be told and retold.

Mrs. Rumbold sighed heavily.

"If her ladyship 'd only have waited," she said. "Right is right an 'll right itself somehow, I say, in the end. The child herself 's proof enough now. Poor misguided thing, if she 'd only have waited!"

Bella was sentimental and held advanced views.

"Perhaps she 's happiest as she is," she said. "I'm sure

young Mr. Riversley was as nice a young gentleman as ever I see."

Mrs. Rumbold could not discuss that. Right was right, she had just said; then wrong must be wrong.

"But I pity more than I blame," she added, as one who concedes a point.

(Not a word nor a sign had come from the fled lady.)

A week passed, as I have said, before Lord Dormoral looked at Jezebel again. Then the scene on the lawn repeated itself and was prolonged. Lord Dormoral played with the child as a child.

Upon the sight of the two at play came Miss Dexter, returning from one of her solitary walks.

"Dear me," she said blandly.

"Come here," said her brother.

Miss Dexter approached and sat down on the seat. She was dressed in rough garments, designed by herself and executed by a tailor in the village. She wore a man's collar and hat, and was merely a decade or so in advance of her times.

"Look at this," said Lord Dormoral.

"Look at what?" said Miss Dexter. "I know Jezebel well."

Neither spoke for some moments. The child slid to the ground and ran about on the warm grass. A daisy or two flattened down by mowing-machine and roller showed a tiny blossom. Jezebel plucked such an one and brought it to the old man's knee.

"Pussy had the laugh of you," said Miss Dexter then. "I've known that some months. Where have your eyes been?"

She paused.

"In the gallery," she said, "you will find proof enough if you look for it. A Riversley never had hair of that dye — nor a Brakspear either for that matter. The child's a Dexter through and through. I see you in every look, and

little enough of her mother — as little as may be. I see myself, too, in her mettle, and now and then in her face, though I never was the beauty that she'll be. But it is in the gallery that I see her foretold. The Duchess of Oswestry — the 'Ill-wishing Duchess' (twice a Dexter, remember, for she married her cousin, a Dormoral, before she left the Dower House for strawberry leaves and St. James's), has her very eyes and mouth. Look at her eyes. Deep as pools they are, and black as water in the shade. They might hold all the secrets of nature and men's hearts, as hers were supposed to have held them. Poor Ill-wishing Duchess with the evil eye! What a fool you were, Dormoral."

Her brother made no answer. He took the little flower absently from the child's hand and Jezebel went to seek another. Sunlight dappled the lawn under the trees. Away across the park the warmth of the day showed itself as a shimmering haze. Lord Dormoral's Alderneys whisked active tails on the other side of the railings that bordered the gardens, dividing them from the pastures beyond. Every cow had a bell and a tinkling music filled the drowsy air. To the sound of it Jezebel was living her summer life at this time.

"To-morrow," said Lord Dormoral after a silence, "to-morrow you will be good enough to dress yourself respectably and we shall pay some visits."

"Visits!" cried Miss Dexter.

The thing was unheard of.

"Visits," said her brother. "I shall call at Warbeck."

"Warbeck!" cried Miss Dexter.

"Yes, Warbeck," said her brother, and looked at her hard.

Miss Dexter considered.

"I shall call there," said Lord Dormoral, "and at Apton too."

Miss Dexter's forehead was puckered.

"The Hamer-Aclands are away," she said presently. She spoke parenthetically, giving the item of information not as the sum of her deliberations, but as a thing that came into them incidentally.

"Away, are they?" said her brother. "How do you know?"

She chanced to know, she said; or spoke to the best of her belief. Some one had mentioned the fact — the servants, perhaps; or possibly she had read it in one of the papers.

"Well, then, we 'll leave Apton to another time. We 'll go to Warbeck and Broom."

"What 's in your mind?" asked Miss Dexter.

"Jezebel 's in my mind. I 'm going to make friends for her of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when I am dead they may have her in their houses."

"The steward writes himself unjust," Miss Dexter hazarded and laughed.

"On the contrary," said Lord Dormoral, and said no more just then.

He rose and went leisurely towards the house.

His sister looked after him. Jezebel had run farther afield in her daisy hunt and returned now with three buds clasped tightly in her little pink palm. She espied her father's retreating form and would have followed him, but her aunt caught her arm. Miss Dexter took the child on her knee.

"Precious fools we made of ourselves, Jezebel, — your father and I, — precious fools. But why were n't you born five years sooner, and above all why were n't you a boy?"

## CHAPTER V

THE next day Mrs. Weston was told to array the little girl in her best and be ready to drive out at three. The good woman's honest heart leapt. Bethesda's eyes and her mouth severally took the shape of an O.

Mrs. Weston said, "What did I tell you?" — every one said it, even Bethesda.

Three o'clock struck. The carriage was at the door. Lord Dormoral came from the library and fussed about the hall. Mrs. Weston and Jezebel were nearly as punctual, Mrs. Weston in a nurse's neat print, cloth coat, and black bonnet, and Jezebel prancing in white and a pair of white shoes which afforded her huge satisfaction. They had to be shown to Lord Dormoral, who said, "Yes, I see. Very nice. But don't let your feet turn your head." ("Why may n't I?" said Jezebel, and to the footman, who smiled and shifted the rugs he was holding from one arm to the other.) Then Jezebel looked doubtfully at Buckram, who for some reason or possibly none was not a favourite with her, and could not resist the temptation to point out her glory. Buckram smiled indulgently and said, "Very pretty, Miss Jezebel."

Lord Dormoral frowned.

"Sound the gong," he commanded.

Buckram did so.

Miss Dexter appeared. She took a pair of gloves from their silver paper (she had no maid, having had a succession and finally thrown off the yoke) and pulled them asunder as she came downstairs. She had obeyed her brother's injunctions and was suitably, even smartly dressed, and for once she was not going to drive. She wished, perhaps,

to give full emphasis to the formality of this day's undertaking. She carried a parasol (she was brown as a berry) under her arm.

Lord Dormoral eyed her severely.

"The carriage has waited ten minutes," he said.

Miss Dexter said, "Has it?" but looked amiable. She was imperturbably good-humoured just then.

"You must make allowances," she said, as she took her seat; "I don't often dress myself up — no, the dust rug, you booby" (to the footman); "do you want to smother us? — and the thing takes time. I look fairly decent, don't you think, Weston?"

Mrs. Weston complimented her upon her appearance.

"Quite so," said Miss Dexter, 'I was sure you 'd agree with me."

The rug was changed. The footman waited for orders.

"Warbeck," said Lord Dormoral.

The day was all that could be wished. The heat was tempered by a gentle breeze and the fat country smiled under a measureless sky. Jezebel knelt on her nurse or the cushions, her back to the company as often as not, and was ecstatic over everything that caught her eye. She remembered the white shoes presently and must needs show them to her aunt.

Miss Dexter said she did not know which was smarter, Jezebel or herself.

"I never felt so respectable and commonplace," she added.

Mrs. Weston, the observant, stored up material for discussion at home. When Jezebel became fidgety, Lord Dormoral showed no irritation. He took the child upon his knee and talked agreeable nonsense. The behaviour of the family party was altogether exemplary.

The turning over of new leaves was a thing to make draughts, and if the afternoon could not be said to promise the results altogether that Lord Dormoral had hoped,

it was a chapter in Jezebel's life and demands to be chronicled.

Lord Dormoral, had he been asked why he chose Warbeck for the first of the visits whereby he intended to reconquer the county, might or might not have admitted that he paid Lady Malmsey the compliment of acknowledging her to be leader in the social affairs of the neighbourhood. This, admitted or not, was one of his reasons. Another was something more subtle. The late Lord Malmsey had been mixed up, as a young man, not a little with Hinton Dormoral in its less creditable days, and had had his name coupled freely with that of Miss Dexter, at the time when her looks were more notable than her discretion; so in the reign of the present mistress of Warbeck there had not been any very cordial relations between the two houses. Thus, friendly intercourse, if so be he could establish it, would, he felt, be a help in furthering the best interests of his damaged child.

He reckoned, however, without taking into account certain characteristics of his own and Miss Dexter's, and needless to say these were quickly called forth.

Lady Malmsey was at home, and, receiving her visitors, accorded them a welcome, which, if it had not positive coldness, could be credited with little warmth. She talked of the weather and the length of the drive, was armed at all points, and made elaborate skirtings round all that was intimate. At a mention of Hinton Dormoral she put up horticulture as a shield. Her own roses had done well that year and she had succeeded with her carnations. But then she always did. Bulbs had not flourished so well. She attributed their failure (their comparative failure, she should say) to this or to that. Mrs. Hamer-Acland at Apton had had a similar experience.

Lord Dormoral, waiting his opportunity, made allusion to Jezebel, avoiding the name with a "my little daughter," and intimating that she sat with her nurse in the carriage.

Lady Malmsey looked unspeakably impersonal then; said "Oh, really"; and that children liked the open air.

"I make a point of leaving my little boy outside if I ever take him visiting, which is seldom. I always think the fresh air —"

"You're quite right," said Miss Dexter, who with the fighting spirit was ready to close with her. "Hot stuffy rooms are bad for children."

She looked at the shut windows. Lady Malmsey looked at Miss Dexter.

"Just so," she said; "but as I say, I seldom take him visiting, and for that matter I am afraid I am an indifferent visitor myself, as I fear you must know."

Then it was Miss Dexter who said, "Oh, really."

"I fear so," said Lady Malmsey, "and I can scarcely hope to hide my failing from you at Hinton Dormoral."

"Oh, pray," said Miss Dexter, "don't trouble yourself on that score. We don't stand on ceremony or indeed take any account of trifles."

Whereat Lady Malmsey, who had been born a Fitz-Rockingham and was a very great person, indeed, nor had ever before heard her visits or aught that concerned them called trifles, rose at once as a fish to a fly.

"I shall feel then, Miss Dexter," she said, "if I am rather long in returning the visit for which I am indebted to you and Lord Dormoral to-day, that I may rely on your overlooking my defection — in the number of your other visitors." She flicked a speck of dust from her dress. "One catches at straws, does one not, to save one's self from condemnation?"

Lord Dormoral, who had held his peace during this passage at arms, rose now to his feet.

"The horses," he said blandly; "we must n't keep them standing. They will be tired."

"My brother," said Miss Dexter, "does not forget your paper in the 'Parish Magazine,' was it? — I 'm so stupid —

or the 'Uncton Weekly News'? — on Dumb Animals, and how you told us to judge for them by ourselves."

"I wish you good-bye," said Lord Dormoral.

"Good-bye," said Lady Malmsey. She had nothing else ready.

But when they were gone she shook out her skirts (to combine fact with metaphor) and opened the windows. She remembered that her room had been called stuffy and she closed them again with some display of heat. The room, her boudoir, was really warm, however, and she was not in point of truth of the "stuffy" order of women at all. It was more dignified to ignore even the feelings Miss Dexter had roused, and the windows were reopened. At least she, Lady Malmsey, had given as good as she got and this she might remember, nothing hindering but Christianity.

Miss Dexter meanwhile was flushed and not without a sense of righteous exhilaration. She loved a fight. That was the trait which poor Pussy had never understood and under which she had bowed to hopeless succumbing. If she had been able to give blow for blow, Miss Dexter would have had of her an opinion of sorts — even, perhaps, have respected her and accorded to her such affection as it was in her to give. But Lady Dormoral always doubled under and often wept. Lady Malmsey, detestable woman that she was, was worth fighting.

"We are denied the use of our fists," said Miss Dexter; "our greatest grievance, Weston, believe me. Jezebel, you may as well listen, too. Your fighting aunt speaks, and the spirit of Boadicea is upon her — upon her, do I say? The spirit of the Warrior Queen is in her."

Mrs. Weston's face was what is vulgarly called a study. She did not understand a word Miss Dexter was saying, but she treasured each one up — Boadicea possibly escaping her — for later narration. Miss Dexter was Miss Dexter, and half your time you could n't tell what she meant

or did not mean. "Weston," she would say, "I know you'll agree with me." Agree with her! bless you, she (Mrs. Weston) did n't know what the strange lady was talking about. Fighting aunt! Did ever you hear the like?

"For you'll have fighting to do, Jezebel," she was saying now to the little girl — "hard fighting, or I make grievous error. Show me your fists. Double 'em — like that. For, perhaps, as the world gets older and wiser restrictions may be withdrawn from us women, and sex be a matter of spirit not body, as it is at this day if folk knew it. Then your body may comport itself as your spirit directs and your fists have their chance if they wish it."

"What nonsense is this?" said her brother.

But he chuckled, perhaps at Mrs. Weston's expression. His looks had been turbulent enough leaving Warbeck.

"I blame you partly," he said suddenly, after a pause.

He addressed Miss Dexter and spoke with thoughts only for context. His sister, however, caught his meaning.

"The aggression was hers," she said.

"You watched for it."

"We watched together, then, at that moment. She was holding you off. 'Fresh air for children!' She was refusing to open her doors to this symbol." — Miss Dexter took Jezebel onto her knee. — "You were glad when I took up the challenge. It was better for me to do it than you. Confess it: you were glad."

Lord Dormoral readjusted his position, settling himself more comfortably, and allowing his muscles, which he had held rigid in his displeasure, to relax.

"We defeat my plans thus," he said shortly, "granting that I gave you my approval. We have to keep our tempers and must bear that in mind. You hear me."

"I hear," said Miss Dexter. She never resented his bluntness.

There was a silence between them for a mile or two of leafy country. The carriage rolled smoothly over well-kept

roads. Jezebel wriggled down from Miss Dexter's knee — the knee of the Fighting Aunt and the Warrior Queen — and clambered up on to the seat beside Mrs. Weston. She chattered all the time, and if her sayings are not recorded it must not be supposed that she was mute. Innumerable objects had to be pointed out to the adoring Weston. Many of these had strange names, and some of them of no known orthography. Her generalization was arresting.

The carriage went through a village, Little Uncton, — whose name, with the "little" discarded, had been usurped by the neighbouring town. A victoria stood before the door of the post-office. Miss Dexter caught a glimpse of it as a corner was turned.

"That was the Broom livery, I believe," she said. "We shall find that Lady Margaret Arlington is not at home."

She proved right. Lord Dormoral showed impatience.

"Drive back through Little Uncton."

He hoped to meet the carriage. But it was not to be seen. He gave a fresh direction. Some one should see Jezebel!

"We 'll go on to St. Eldreds now we are here," he said, "and home by Ettram. I hate the Dean and Mrs. Prendergast both — he 's a prig and she 's a fool — but whom don't I hate and where shall we not find prigs and idiots? St. Eldreds, Andrew, — the Deanery."

"We do things thoroughly, Weston," said Miss Dexter; and Mrs. Weston said, "Yes 'm."

A few miles brought them to the town. Mrs. Prendergast was at home.

"Miss Jezebel will come in with us," said Lord Dormoral to the nurse. "We shall send for you presently."

The drawing-room was empty when the Hinton Dormoral party was ushered in. It was a stiff room. Oxford frames gave it and the engravings they held an austere and ecclesiastical air. A marble clock bore an elaborate inscription. Many other things had been presented by

well-wishing congregations and told their tale in silver letters. A screen with Gothic panels was before the hearth.

Lord Dormoral grunted as he sat down. Miss Dexter sniffed and said, "That's just how I feel; still each to his taste, and the oak and the angles are perhaps very comforting if you really understand them."

Mrs. Prendergast came in.

She was a woman with a forehead. She called it her brow, and displayed it as other women display other parts, and to an extent that verged on exposure. It needed, the irreverent declared, all the relief afforded by her earrings, two ponderous cascades of shining jet, to save it from a charge of positive indecorum. Yet it represented intellect and higher culture. Her figure was flat and long, and the frivolous called her Mrs. Prenderghastly.

She said, "How do you do," and "How do you do," and that the Dean would be down directly, sounding the *i* as in *dire*, and, by the same token, having occasion to use the word "knowledge," must needs call it knōwledge, as Lord Dormoral noted with an inward "Be damn to her!"

She was dignified as the stiff drawing-room, but she was not at her ease, which Lord Dormoral, looking, it might be, for slurs or aloofness, was not long in observing. She was courteous; no fault could be found with her manner; but she was apprehensive. She was hoping no other visitors would be announced, Lord Dormoral told himself, or perhaps was not sure just how far to unbend. The prospective appearance of the Dean seemed to be her shield and her buckler. In less than two minutes, as a statement, it had ended three sentences for her.

Lord Dormoral hoped he was well — hoped it brusquely, his eye following the figure of his little girl, who had wandered out through the open window on to a lawn where she seemed to be picking daisies, and to whom he had not yet called attention.

Quite well, Mrs. Prendergast thanked God and Lord Dormoral — at least, when she said that, she meant well — for him, for, as Lord Dormoral knew, he was a sad invalid. Yes, his poor throat, but he would . . .

Lord Dormoral interrupted the promise that had become a threat by turning to his sister. He nodded in the direction of the window.

"Bring the mischievous little person in," he said, "to say how do you do to Mrs. Prendergast."

Miss Dexter rose at once, smiling grimly.

Mrs. Prendergast had been sitting with her back to the window. She turned quickly, her earrings a-jingle.

"Oh," she said, "I did n't see . . ."

She looked frankly alarmed.

"Eh?" said Lord Dormoral.

Mrs. Prendergast murmured inaudibly.

Lord Dormoral said, "What, Mrs. Prendergast? I don't hear what you say."

Miss Dexter and her niece were having a conflict of wills on the lawn. Miss Dexter the younger preferred the grass and the daisies to the drawing-room and Mrs. Prendergast. Miss Dexter the elder was saying to her (could the others have heard her), "My dear, I agree with you wholly. But you 've got to come in for all that."

"Children love to be out of doors, do they not?" said Mrs. Prendergast. "The sunshine, the fresh air . . ."

The words were unfortunate, reminiscent as they were to Lord Dormoral of a recent application. The next words spoken were more infelicitous still.

The two Miss Dexters came in from the lawn.

"Ah," said Mrs. Prendergast, "this is er — this is your . . . I mean this is the . . ."

Lord Dormoral had, in truth, far less self-control than his sister. Impatience had been simmering within him for some moments, if not indeed since the entrance of his hostess.

"Yes," he said firmly ; "this is Jezebel."

He might as well have said, "This, Mrs. Prendergast, is the Scarlet Woman" ; and he knew it.

Mrs. Prendergast (Miss Dexter permitted herself to touch lightly — the jest was avowedly obvious and cheap — upon "Prenderaghast" in chuckling retrospect !) — Mrs. Prendergast, I say, and the Oxford frames, and the screen with the Gothic panels, and all the presentation pieces winced. An outrage had been committed in the sanctity of the sacred chamber.

"She looks very well," said the pained lady, when she could trust herself to speak.

"She *is* very well," said Lord Dormoral, and stooped to the child. "You've never had a day's illness in your life, have you, my darling ?"

"Never," said Jezebel, shaking her head.

Mrs. Prendergast spoke of "a picture of health." She received but scant help in her difficult case.

"A picture of a good deal besides health," said Lord Dormoral, "or I, as her father, venture to think so."

The good lady looked her dismay. She felt herself led on to ground so delicate that she had difficulty in finding a foothold at all.

"We may claim beauty for you, I think, Miss Dusty-Locks, may n't we ?" pursued Lord Dormoral. He took the child's hand and extended it. "Beauty and vigour and a will of your own. But say how d'y' do to the lady."

"I don't want to," said Jezebel, with fascinated eyes on her forehead.

Tea, followed by the entrance of the Dean, saved the situation.

But, when all was said and done, the visit could not be called conspicuously successful either. Lord Dormoral had intended to be suave, but his natural intolerance had gotten the better of him. Miss Dexter laughed in the carriage as it drove away.

"'Jezebel,' said you, 'Jezebel!' Not 'Jezza' nor 'Baby,' the compromise ready to your hand, or even 'Belle,' to stretch a point, which, I take it, is pardonable; but 'Jezebel,' I trouble you, blunt as a bullet. The Deanery — the very Close — had never before given admission to anything so blatant. Jezebel! Ha, ha! You'll forgive me."

Lord Dormoral, as we know, was not without a sense of the ridiculous, and he said grimly, "What's to be done with us?"

He addressed Mrs. Weston, or that good woman thought so and murmured, "Your lordship?"

Lord Dormoral laughed out.

"We're botching Miss Jezebel's chances between us," he said.

Mrs. Weston said, "Please, sir, you'll never do so, that I'm sure of."

"Not willingly," grunted his lordship. "But how help it?"

"Well, well!" thought the nurse, and "Oh, dear, and oh, dear! They're cautions, the pair of 'em."

(A vulgar word even for Weston.)

"Still I can't help but like 'em," she added — internally also — "even Miss Dexter. 'Fighting Aunt!' 'Warrior Queen!' Just to think of it."

She went on to puzzle things out; and hit truth, did she know it, when she conjectured that poor Lady Dormoral had not understood the family into which she had married. Even Miss Dexter was human. Take her right and she never would harm you. See her now with the child! What though, as often as not, she dubbed the little girl Imp or Limblet (why Limblet?) or "Witch"? One word was as good as another if you spoke without malice.

Mrs. Weston had begun to make excuses.

"It's only her fun," she said of Miss Dexter.

The latter part of the way home, from the borders of

Ettram onwards, Jezebel slept the sleep of the young. Her hat was pushed to one side and she was cradled on the faithful Weston's breast. Her black lashes lay broadly on her red little cheeks. One fat little hand — the left — lay palm upwards and showed pink dimples, and little fat creases at the wrist; the other was tucked away and invisible. Lord Dormoral watched her as a mother might watch. Twice he leant forward to perform some little office for her which his kind thought suggested — once to shade her eyes from the sun by arranging a pleat of her cloak as a shelter, and again, to move her arm when he thought its position might cramp it.

## CHAPTER VI

Mrs. Prendergast called soon and "got the thing over." The expression was the Dean's. He disapproved of the Dexters, and looked upon the entire parish of Hinton Dormoral with horror (as one might look upon — Benin, for easy example), never failing to draw himself up at any mention of poor Mr. Barnstaple.

Lady Malmsey took her time, and let a couple of months pass before she troubled herself to say Hinton Dormoral to her coachman. When at length she did so, the brother and sister were denied her.

Buckram said, "Not at home," in the face of the fact that a family group was to be seen on the lawn through the trees that skirted the drive.

Lady Malmsey heaved a sigh of relief, and sent out her card with an alacrity that was intended to show that she had had it in hopeful readiness; and "Home," she said briskly.

Her little son was with her, and he had duly seen the party under the cedars.

"I know," said his mother. "But I 'm only too thankful. They are odious people — quite impossible."

"There was tea on the lawn," said the little boy ruefully. "I could see a table, and I do so want my tea."

"You would n't have got any, anyway, dear," said his mother. "I should n't have taken you in."

Philip Malmsey showed opposition to that.

"Oh, I say!" he cried, in petulant protest, and argued. Why would n't she have taken him in?

Lady Malmsey did not reply as she might have replied: that he had been brought with her for the express purpose of *not* being taken in (and contaminated, to be

understood by those who might understand anything so subtle!), but said firmly that she would not have taken him in though he wanted tea never so badly; and came to the point in the end.

"They are not nice people," she said, "and I don't mean you to know them."

Thus Lady Malmsey proposed, and let God slip her memory.

Philip Malmsey said, "Why aren't they nice?"

That Lady Malmsey could not pretend to know.

"There's a little child," said Philip, "and she's nice, anyway."

"Is there, indeed?" said his mother; "and pray, darling, how do you know, and who said she was nice?"

"Charles said so. She was in the carriage one day when they came to call at Warbeck."

The boy had a clear voice, and the ears of the footman on the box grew red.

Lady Malmsey smiled. That the Dormoral *ménage* should be theme for the servants' hall was as she expected, and went to prove, as it were, her discrimination.

"Well," she said, "that's as it may be; but they are not likely to come to Warbeck again just yet, dear, thank goodness, and the less we see of them the better."

She settled the cushion at her back as upon occasion she had flicked dust from her dress.

"The name of the nice child, I may tell you, is Jezebel."

That set the little boy to his questions again. He received reticent answers. Finally he said that he thought Jezebel rather a nice name, and presently dropped the subject, when it lay still and seemed closed. But that, to be exact, was the day when the subject was opened.

Hinton Dormoral could do without Warbeck — Lord Dormoral's point when he gave his prospective directions to Buckram. A question of graver moment than that of the relations between the two houses was exercising him

just then. He did not seek to deceive himself. His affection for his little daughter was becoming the paramount influence in his life. He ordered his comings and goings to suit hers, shutting himself up less and less in his library and spending the long summer days in her company; so that the sight of the old man on his stick and the little maid running beside him this way and that as her butterfly fancy directed, and with or without Mrs. Weston or the blushing Bethesda in attendance, became no unusual thing on the roads and in the village. The child, upon her part, flew to him when and wheresoever she espied him.

Thus it was round the neck of the being he had come to love most dearly on earth that he had hung a millstone for all the world to see. More, the stone bore an inscription which he who ran might read.

John Buckram's allusion, one day in his hearing, to the little girl as Miss Jezebel set his hands clenching. An edict was on the tip of his tongue then that the name was not to be breathed again in Hinton Dormoral.

"Miss Jezebel's pram," said John Buckram.

Lord Dormoral's nerves were ajar, and he said in his haste, "I won't hear that word, John."

"I beg your pardon, my lord?" said Buckram. He had not understood, or, maybe, had understood perfectly.

Lord Dormoral frowned and hesitated. The order trembled to be spoken — spoken with heat, definitely, peremptorily. But the question was too serious to settle off-hand and in a moment of irritation. He controlled himself.

"'Pram!'" he said, "'pram!' What horrible shortening is this? While the day has twelve hours we need not descend to such damnable clippings to lessen our labour. 'Pram,' Buckram, — you, who have brains of a sort and power to use 'em, and to whom I give the run of my library, to employ such a word! Be ashamed of yourself. Leave 'prams and all such desecrations to ignorant, slov-

enly women. For shame! I'm ashamed of you. That's a perambulator, John Buckram (the word's cumbrous enough, that I grant you), but 'pram!' 'pram!' my ear's outraged."

"Perambulator." John Buckram smiled gravely. "I'll remember, your lordship. I ought to have said Miss Jezebel's perambulator."

Lord Dormoral's frown did not lighten. He was in many minds.

The millstone he was powerless to remove, and he knew it; but the inscription — would it avail anything to efface it as well as might be by superscribing another? Erasure was impossible. The letters which he had written in his sinister jesting were not to be wiped out. They might be hidden by others, that was all. To any profit such concealment, when that which was below must for ever be there for all and sundry to see who might lift a corner by chance or design? He might call the child Pussy (from Purity) after her mother, or Baby after herself, or whatever he pleased; she could never throw off the name in which he had baptized her. In the end the problem was solved partially by the inventiveness of the faithful Weston. No orders were issued at all. Of her own accord — the title Miss Dexter, which was Jezebel's exact prerogative, having too long been held by Jezebel's aunt to be transferred without hopeless confusion — she took to calling her charge Miss Jessy, and the other servants followed her lead. For some time past endearments of various kinds or such fancies as Dusky Locks, Child of my Heart, and such jestings as Trouble the House, Little Mouse, and the like, had stood for her name, in the vocative, at all events, on the lips of her father. Gradually these alternated with Jessy or Jess; and Jezebel, however gently spoken, became rare and more rare. The name met the difficult case, and people were spared a challenge or a blow in the face.

Enoch Meridew, Bethesda's grandfather, called the little girl Bear Tamer, and spoke wisely.

The process of bear-taming proceeded. It was Lord Dormoral that was on a string. Jezebel ran free.

So passed the long summer.

In the autumn, which was but a further summer that year, there occurred an incident that must be recorded.

Mrs. Weston one day received a letter which caused her some considerable excitement. She had few correspondents and she turned the envelope over and examined the postmarks. Bethesda was present. The nursery breakfast was in progress. Bethesda ventured a word of blushing banter. (Weston, like Mrs. Rumbold, was a spinster, taking her title by courtesy — an explanation which, for the sake of her good name and the sensitive, involves the further explaining that Jezebel, after the flight of her mother, was brought up by hand.)

"No," she said, "it is not from *him*, so there."

Jezebel's spoon beat on her plate.

"Bless the child, has she eaten all that? Not much more, Bethesda, — not above half what you 're giving her. There, that 'll do."

While Jezebel's spoon was plied between her plate and her little red mouth, Mrs. Weston opened the letter. Bethesda expected to hear something of its contents. It was rarely Mrs. Weston's habit to keep anything to herself, and she would read out scraps for Bethesda's gratification and her own. But when she had read a few words, she got up with some murmured excuse and left the room. Bethesda heard her go into the night nursery. It was some ten minutes or so before she came back.

"No bad news, I hope?" said Bethesda.

"No," said Mrs. Weston. "No. It was nothing — a letter from some one I have n't heard of for some time, that 's all. I was surprised to get it after so long."

She kept silence on the matter, but Bethesda could see

that something exercised her. She wrote a letter that day and employed craft of a sort in the posting of it. It was not put into the box with the rest of the letters, nor posted at Hinton Dormoral at all. She invented some infantile need on the part of her charge, and was granted the governess cart and pony. Bethesda had to be taken because she could drive, and she saw Mrs. Weston include the post-office in the round of her shopping at Uncton.

For the course of a week after that her demeanour was mysterious. She watched the post eagerly, Bethesda saw, and presently received another letter. This she took from the room as before and read privately. She wore a look of suppressed excitement when she came back, and Bethesda longed to ask questions, but was delicate or lacked daring. The next morning Weston petitioned the governess cart for the afternoon.

A message came up from Lord Dormoral to say that Miss Jessy was to be ready to drive with him at three.

Mrs. Weston's face fell, and with it her work and her hands to her lap. Of all days! her mien seemed to say. The command clearly placed her in difficulties. Yet Lord Dormoral often drove out with his daughter; the thing was always to be expected. Weston knit her brows and bit her thread. Nor could she sew on.

Out of the silence of her exasperation or perplexity (the messenger, Buckram, being gone) she spoke, and spoke sharply. The child could n't go. She just could n't go, and there was an end of it.

Now, nobody thwarted Lord Dormoral, so Bethesda, with round mouth and eyes, waited explanations.

"Don't I tell you she can't go?" said Mrs. Weston, venting her impatience upon Bethesda's expression. "What 's the good of standing there staring like a stock!"

Bethesda assumed her pink blush. Mrs. Weston repented.

"There," she said, "I don't mean to be cross, but you

do rile me, Bethesda. Miss Jessy can't go out driving this afternoon. The sun 's much too 'ot for her these days, and besides I want to take her to Uncton to fit her with shoes. A short drive 's quite enough for her. We shall have her knocked up if we 're not careful."

Bethesda looked over to where Jezebel was disembowelling a doll.

"She looks well enough," she said, for something to say.

"There you go again," said Mrs. Weston, and threatened to splutter afresh, but fell into silence.

"It takes a long time to try on shoes," she said presently. "His lordship 'll get tired of waiting. He 'd much better let us drive to Uncton to-day and get the shoes, had n't he? I think I 'll go and ask him."

But she did n't move.

"Or why could n't he drive after tea? We could be back in time easy."

"Won't the shoes do to-morrow?" said Bethesda.

"No, they won't do to-morrow," Mrs. Weston said shortly.

She plucked up her courage and went to Lord Dormoral. She was wise enough not to pile up her excuses, but those she put forward he brushed aside lightly.

"Then may Miss Jessy go with you alone?" she asked in fine. "Will your lordship want me?"

Lord Dormoral often took the child without the nurse. It must have been sheer perversity that made him say no to the first question, yes to the second.

"What 's taken you?" he added.

"I thought I 'd finish Miss Jessy's new frock."

"Let it wait," said Lord Dormoral.

Mrs. Weston's predicament was the occasion of Bethesda's enlightenment. She went back to the nursery and said: —

"Here, Bethesda!"

Bethesda was there.

"I 've got to tell you something and you've got to help me."

Bethesda had not to prick up her ears; they had been alert as those of an animal all day.

"I 'm to drive out with his lordship and my baby this afternoon and that knocks something very particular on the head."

"Yes," said Bethesda. "Yes."

"You must go a message for me while I 'm out. You can hold your tongue, I know, for you 're a good girl, or I would n't trust you."

"Yes," said Bethesda, "you can trust me."

"It 's a matter of eight miles," said Mrs. Weston, with seeming irrelevance. "Four there and four back; but you 're a strong walker and you can manage it. I am that put out at not being able to go myself I can't say, but it 's not to be helped. Do you know a little wood just before you get to the canal on this side of Uncton?"

"The Half-Mile Copse," said Bethesda.

"I don't know what it 's called. We drive along by the side of it when we go into Uncton by the upper road."

Bethesda knew the spot. She had nutted there as a child.

"It 's after the cross-roads, when you can turn off for Ettram," she said.

"Yes, that 's it. There was something about the cross-roads in the letter I know, but I remember it best by the canal. The towing-path runs by one end of it. Well, that 's where I want you to go. You remember me getting a letter last week?"

Now it was coming.

"It was from Lady Dormoral."

Bethesda gave a little cry.

"Hush," said Mrs. Weston, though there was no one in hearing. "Lady Dormoral that was, I should say, for she 's now Mrs. Riversley. She 's in England, and she

wants to see Miss Jessy. I was to have taken her to this wood this afternoon, and now I can't. I can't even go and speak to the poor lady because of going for this blessed drive. So you must just go and explain to her how it is. I don't know what she 'll want to do. You 'd better leave it to her to decide what she 'd like."

A good deal of consultation had to be gone through before it was ultimately settled what Bethesda was to say. Mrs. Weston proposed a few "alternatives," and told Bethesda to assure the lady of her willingness, indeed her anxiety, to arrange the meeting that was desired, and to express her sorrow at the frustration of the plan; but as Jezebel's mother came from some distance it must be left to her to say what could or could not be arranged.

At three Lord Dormoral, Jezebel, and Mrs. Weston set out for their drive, and Bethesda for her walk. . . .

It was now Mrs. Weston's whole wish that the Uncton road should be avoided; but in her effort to deter Lord Dormoral from his inconvenient purpose she had urged the shoes that Jezebel was supposed to need, or perhaps needed, and the tedium of assisting at the fitting, among her excuses.

"We 'll take Uncton on the way back," said Lord Dormoral, to her dismay.

Yet what else could she expect when the shoeing of Jezebel had been represented as a matter of pressing importance? Her drive was beset with misgivings.

"H'm," said Lord Dormoral, in the bootmaker's an hour or so later, when the shoes had been bought, "the thing was n't so arduous."

Fitting, however, Mrs. Weston averred, sometimes did take a time unconscionable. She herself had spent twenty minutes to half an hour again and again in a bootshop, and some people did n't like to be bothered. Miss Jessy's foot, to be sure, was a model, and her own "between the sizes," but you never could tell.

The parcel was sent out to the carriage.

"Now, perhaps you 'll be easy, Mrs. Nurse," said his lordship. And "Home," he said to the footman.

Mrs. Weston, howbeit, was uneasier still. The interview in the wood might reasonably be supposed to be ended. Bethesda, or Jezebel's mother, or both might even now be on the highroad. There was a bit of it, a hundred yards, perhaps, that would be a veritable trap for such persons as did not wish to be seen. This was where it ran between the bare walls of the workhouse on one side and the equally shelterless and impenetrable hedge that flanked the waterworks on the other. One making for the railway station must follow this uncompromising path.

The stretch of bald highway was empty. Mrs. Weston breathed again. But three minutes later, at a bend in the road the carriage came in sight of two figures that behaved strangely. They dived into an overhung ditch. Mrs. Weston beheld their manœuvre and suppressed an exclamation.

"Eh?" said Lord Dormoral.

"Nothing," declared Mrs. Weston, with haste, "nothing. Picking blackberries, I suppose. For a minute I could n't make out."

"The brambles are thick with them. This young lady would like some; would n't you, Jessy? We 'll stop."

"Not here," said Mrs. Weston. "Please, my lord, don't put it into her head. They must be choked with dust here on the road and we shall give the child colic. I 'll pick her a few nice ones at home. And in her white frock, too."

"Perhaps you 're right," said Lord Dormoral.

Three people had had a narrow escape.

. . . . . .

At eight that night, when the evening had closed in, there was a whispering in the nursery, and there were listenings on the stairs, and a furtive opening and shutting of doors. Jezebel woke suddenly to find some one beside

her crib — some one she did not know; some one who kissed her; who strained her to her heart and asked breathless questions; who cried a great deal; was timid as a hare; and who went, as she had come, to an accompaniment of whisperings, listenings, pauses, and furtiveness.

## CHAPTER VII

Lord Dormoral, in the interests of Jezebel, pursued his polite expedition to conquer the county. He took to social life in advanced middle age (he was not really old), was seen at local functions, filled his house from time to time with visitors, and paid all the visits he had in his mind on that day on the lawn. Apton, on the return of the Hamer-Aclands, Broom, Russets Court, Flack, The Hedge, Oatlands, Castle Oliver, Ortolan, and Weech (all seats of the mighty), were duly worked off a list. People responded, some gladly. Notes were compared all the same. Lady Malmsey saw to that. She spoke of a Forlorn Hope and the Despairing Campaign. She raised her eyebrows a good deal. You could n't outrage that county, she said, and keep it; but she professed to look on smiling. The conclusion was foregone.

Mrs. Prendergast, under the patronage of Warbeck, spoke of a Very Sad Spectacle. This was in the winter when Lord Dormoral gave a series of dinner-parties, to which the invited went with satisfaction (whatever the attitude of the neighbourhood towards Hinton Dormoral very fine persons indeed came to stay there), and at which Miss Dexter behaved fairly well, and was not brusquer to her brother's guests than need be. Lord Dormoral likewise put a curb on his tongue.

But Lady Malmsey was a Very Clever Woman; people, and not the timid alone and the apologetic, might have been heard explaining to her how they came to go; one for this reason, one for that. She listened most graciously. She was opposing Lord Dormoral's invasion with her eye-brows, and even Miss Dexter knew not how to fight eyebrows.

Lord Dormoral, on his side, chuckled a good deal at this time. What mattered Warbeck and St. Eldreds, drawn together in common aloofness? Hinton Dormoral was (you will find mention of it in the Doomsday Book) when Warbeck was unheard of. And as for the Prendergasts, they came of shopkeepers.

Miss Dexter, who had a contempt for convention, and cared not at all for tradition nor the prejudices of society, professed herself wholly amused. The past none the less gave her part in the war with Lady Malmsey something of a personal element. She guessed pretty accurately how that lady was working, and she snapped her fingers repeatedly. But her blood was rising, and sometimes — just sometimes — she shook her fist.

Jezebel grew. She was four, she was five, she was six. Sugar-plums, cunningly wrought and imagined by fat Mrs. Rumbold, told her years on the top of her birthday cake. She began to ask questions. The children she knew (farmers' children mostly, who bobbed their curtseys, and were bidden to say "Quite well, thank you, miss") had all of them mothers. Was Didgy her mother, or Aunt Dexter? Weston expressed horror, talked of something else — and persistently, for Jezebel tried many times; nor when, from Didgy (who was Mrs. Weston, as we may or we may not remember) she went to Lord Dormoral to know whether children whose fathers were lords never had any mothers at all, did she get information that you could in any way look upon as exhaustive.

Didgy had looked shocked. Father laughed loud and long. However: "Gracious, yes, my dear" (so much he would admit), "you've a mother like the rest and the best of 'em."

Then where was she? She would n't be dead, for father was laughing. Something like one of the sums that she had n't yet reached in arithmetic presented itself to her active little brain. It began thus — If people were gener-

ally dead when you cried, what were they when you laughed? If a herring and a half — *that* was what she was thinking of.

"Then where 's my mother?" she asked.

"I don't know, darling," he said, catching her close in his arms. "I don't know; that 's the truth"; and after parrying twenty more questions all beginning with why, he promised in quite the orthodox way that she should understand when she was older.

"Shall I understand when I 'm seven?"

"Or eight," said Lord Dormoral.

She remembered to come to him the day she was seven.

"Not yet," said her father.

"Not *yet?*" echoed Jezebel.

"We must wait a bit still," said her father.

"But I 'm very pe — crocious," urged Jezebel, pausing to get the word right.

"Very pe — what?" said her father.

"Pecrocious," said Jezebel. "Aunt Dexter says so."

Lord Dormoral was delighted. He said to himself, but aloud: —

"It 's worth everything."

"What is?" asked Jezebel quickly.

"To have you for a child."

He swung her by the shoulders and kissed her.

Miss Dexter was by.

"And what 's everything?" she asked.

"All I 've gone through," said her brother.

Poor Pussy Riversley, eating her heart out at Brussels or Bruges, or Dieppe or Boulogne, or wherever at that moment she was spending a grass widowhood that with time was becoming almost perpetual, might, had she heard, have joined Miss Dexter in laughter. She was used to the worst of a bargain, and had got it. That it was which had sent her at a time of special loneliness yearning to Jezebel — an experiment in search of solace which,

as beset with overmuch danger and difficulty, and as leaving her more limp and more heartsore than ever, she did not repeat, preferring to bear with her lot as she might, and even admitting that there was something to be said for her husband, who had made havoc of his life for her sake and a young notion of what honour demanded.

The poor lady, however, no longer concerns us. She was beyond the pale as the world draws its lines, while her daughter and Lord Dormoral for practical purposes were just on this side of it. The point, to be sure, was moot in their case (witness Warbeck's remoteness!), but in hers and such cases as hers has been settled forever by all "right-thinking" people. So poor Pussy Riversley might languish and yearn at Brussels or Bruges or Boulogne, or wherever you go when you are hopelessly damaged ; and if the whole house of Dormoral was not banished thither as well, failing the moon or Kamschatka, the fault was not that of the mistress of Warbeck.

Time went on. Lady Malmsey had to content herself with manœuvring her eyebrows in the hope thereby of directing the attitude of the county. That her tactics were not wholly futile has been admitted. They had just sufficient success to irritate the irritable, and Miss Dexter chafed, laugh as she might, before she was nettled enough, after some fresh tale of eyebrows that reached her, to give words to her feelings to Jezebel.

"Jezebel," she said on that day, using in the heat of the moment the three syllables that were so seldom spoken, "there is a woman you must hate, and you should be able to hate if you 're worthy of the name you bear."

Jezebel fixed sparkling eyes on her face.

"A woman you must hate fervently," pursued Miss Dexter; "and that's the Malmsey woman."

"Why?" said Jezebel.

She wanted to know — but was ready to promise, as she said in eager parenthesis — why she must hate her.

"Because your aunt does, my dear, and if that 's not reason enough, because she 's a silly bag of useless prejudices."

"Have I seen her?"

"Probably not. At the flower-show she wore purple, but you would n't remember."

Jezebel did not. She was ready to hate her, however, having no one to hate, as she said. Aunt Dexter and Father and Mr. Barnstaple and Didgy and Bethesda (when she was n't a donkey), and most of the servants, except perhaps Buckram (and she was n't *sure* that she did n't like *him*), were all people to love, so that some one to hate would of course fill a want.

"And who did you say?" she asked, with the air that grown-up persons call old-fashioned.

"She 's called Lady Malmsey," said her aunt. "The Malmsey woman, you remember."

"I shall call her the Butt," said Jezebel. She was thinking of the Clarence with the picturesque end.

"Call her what you like," said Miss Dexter; "but remember to hate her. She 's your enemy."

"My enemy?" said Jezebel. "Then I ought to love her, ought n't I? Mr. Barnstaple says we 've got to love our enemies and them that despritefully something."

"Does he, indeed?" said Miss Dexter, and smiled to herself. "But he 's right in the main," she presently added; "and I, I 'll admit, am no model Child's Guide, and ought to be whipped for my teaching. I think, all the same, I must get you to hate just one enemy, and that 's Lady Malmsey."

"I shall *love* hating her," said Jezebel, with ready italics.

This little talk fell into its place in the limbo of things Jezebel did not quite understand, or, forgetting for a space, did not wholly forget. She would forget about her mother, the mystery of her absence, and the greater mystery of

every one's reticence, for months at a time, but return periodically to her questions. Didgy always looked embarrassed at such moments, and changed the topic with evident haste; Mr. Barnstaple looked grieved, as if the questions pained him, and Jezebel, believing herself that he had somehow done her mother some harm and was sorry for it, did not press him. Her father she did press, and he held her off with laughter and kisses. Her aunt was no better. No one told her, though time sped, and she shot up apace. Fathers and aunts and nurses and clergymen were all very strange. Children — girls anyway — found them difficult to cope with. They could all of them wriggle. There was no corner in which you could place them from which they would not find some way of escape.

The day when she first saw Lady Malmsey to mark and know her left an abiding impression on Jezebel's mind.

She had driven her aunt in the dog-cart to Uncton, where Miss Dexter had business at the bank, and was waiting there at the door, the horse standing, the groom at his head, when there drove up what she did not immediately know was the Malmsey pony-carriage with the famous Malmsey ponies and Lady Malmsey driving. To Lady Malmsey's imperious motion for room (the dog-cart was stopping the way), the Dormoral groom touching his hat was respectfully preparing to back his young mistress, when something in the almighty imperiousness of the signalled command sent Jezebel's blood to her cheeks and set her eyes blazing.

"Stop where you are," she said to the groom. "We should be asked to move, not told to like that."

"Beg pardon, miss," he murmured hurriedly in an awe-struck tone, "it 's Lady Malmsey."

"Oh, is it?" said Jezebel; "then let her ask me to move or I stay where I am."

Miss Dexter might have been speaking. Lady Malmsey

could not have heard, but must have divined what was passing. She looked unspeakable things and pulled up a few yards down the street. Jezebel, albeit in the wrong as she knew, met her eyes without flinching. She was conscious of the presence of a boy in the pony-carriage. He was looking at her with interest and Lady Malmsey appeared to rebuke him.

"Impertinent little girl," she said to Jezebel before passing into the bank.

Jezebel flushed redder. She was angry in earnest.

Miss Dexter came out and looked by her face as if she had had a brush with her foe, or had been witness to the scene.

"Did you see? Did you see?" said her niece.

"You must tell me," said Miss Dexter, mounting to her place.

She shot a glance of wrath at the groom who had allowed her skirt to graze the wheel.

"Blockhead!" she said. "What's the good of you?"

He settled the rug meekly, touching his hat. That turned her attention to him in connection with what ran in her mind.

"You saw Lady Malmsey go into the bank?" she asked.

"Yes 'm."

"And touched your hat?"

"Yes, 'm."

"You 're not to again, do you understand, not one of you. Tell the others. But no, they won't take it from you. I will tell them myself. Neither to her nor her liveries, do you hear me?"

"Very good, 'm."

He took his place at the back. Jezebel flourished her whip (with an indignant flash of her eyes in the direction of the pony-carriage, whence she was again conscious that some one young and good-looking was directing sympathetic glances at her), and drove off.

"So that's Lady Malmsey," said Jezebel, when she had told her breathless tale of airs and insult. "That's Lady Malmsey — the Malmsey woman. 'Impertinent little girl!' How dare she!"

The colour was still in her face and her eyes were still shining. Miss Dexter felt proud of her looks and her spirit; watched her now as she managed the horse where the railway skirted the road for a bit and the animal put back his ears at the approaching thunder of a train. Jezebel held him with firm hands and soothing tones as he danced on the road. Miss Dexter herself could not have dealt with him better, and said, when the thing had gone by with a roar and a scream: —

"You've the hands of a Dexter. God bless you!"

Jezebel looked pleased. Praise from Miss Dexter was praise. But her feelings were still in tumult.

"Was that her little boy?" she asked abruptly.

"What little boy?"

"In the carriage. He looked as if he did n't like what she was doing, and I saw her say something cross to him."

"I told you she was your enemy."

"One of the people I've got to love," said Jezebel, with something of the voice of her father when he jested grimly.

Miss Dexter did not follow her at once, but eventually remembered the talk of some time back.

"Ah, yes. Mr. Barnstaple, to be sure. H'm! as I said, we must suppose a special dispensation and exclude her. The boy was her son, but he would not approve if he's the son of his father. The Malmseys were men. The taint is Fitz-Rockingham. Yes, even Mr. Barnstaple must let you off loving her."

"The boy looked very nice," said Jezebel.

Her aunt laughed.

"You can love him if you like," she said dryly, and

appeared to be tickled. "That 'd be one way of requiting her. Lord, that 'd be sport."

Jezebel looked puzzled. Miss Dexter, it seemed, had been thinking aloud.

After that she chuckled at intervals half the way home, ejaculating. "Lord!" once or twice from an undivulged context, and allowing her niece to put unanswered questions.

"But I doubt he 's a prig," seemed the sum of her thinking, "—a prig, and his mother in trousers"; for when this, half aloud, had escaped her, she came back to the things of the moment and Jezebel.

## CHAPTER VIII

And now, as if the influence of living Dexters upon our poor Jezebel were not a thing potent enough to mould any child strangely, a dead and gone Dexter, across a gulf of two centuries, must needs stretch out a hand to touch her.

Fate, it would seem, had ordained that her lot and her training should both be abnormal. It was a wonder, perhaps, that she did not run wilder. Hinton Dormoral was the universe for her as yet. She had only been out of it for a couple of months in each year, when she was taken to the sea. Lord Dormoral and her nurses accompanied her, Miss Dexter crying off to spend strange times by herself in impossible clothes and the Black Forest, and Lord Dormoral giving up the visit to a German spa which it had been his annual habit to make, and which had been one of poor Lady Dormoral's severest penances. (How severe you will understand if you think of the conspicuous and incongruous trio — there was more than one hotel and even place in which it was the poor lady's fervent prayer that she might never again have to show her embarrassed face — and the aptitude of Lord Dormoral and Miss Dexter in the gentle art of making enemies!) So for Jezebel the sun rose for five-sixths of the year over the woods of Ettram or the hills beyond Weech, according to the season, and set behind the Devil's Beacon by Cattleford or the uplands of Ortolan. The birds and the beasts were her friends. An Alderney or two would come at her call and the horses in the paddock gather round her. Her life on the whole made for mental and physical health. She was now a tall slim child, with black hair that rippled like water and eyes that you could n't abash. She was a brave

little witch, ripe for mischief, and wholly ready for the finger of her dead ancestress which was poked out of the grave for her guidance.

On the matter of her training Lord Dormoral had views of his own, and would not hear of a governess yet. A governess would squeeze the young mind, so he said, into the shape that might be obtaining just then in young minds. Miss Dexter admitted his point, but gave counsel to which he said, "Nonsense!" Jessy had her and had him: had her for an example how not to behave, it was true; still she knew the three R's and could teach them — had him for dead languages. Her lessons were in no way perfunctory; *he* saw to that. His daughter, he said, should learn no superstitions till she was of an age to sift and reject. He had to combat the teachings of Weston and Mr. Barnstaple as it was, and the little girl, he was determined (and said the thing twice), should learn no superstitions while *he* lived to order her mind.

Thus spake Lord Dormoral, and fed her therewith on his own account! Hinton Dormoral teemed with traditions and legends and Dormoral lore. The antiquity of the place made vast accumulations of such filmy matter a matter of course, and Jezebel never tired of hearing of her ancestors. The house was a setting for romance and the things of the past. It was of various styles and ages. The bulk of it, as it now stood, was Elizabethan, but older parts were earlier Tudor, and there was a tower of red stone, battered even where it was restored, that was said to be what remained of the original pile and to date from Norman times. The atmosphere of the whole was mellow and in keeping with the stories with which Lord Dormoral, interpolating from time to time a "We know better what to believe in these days," or "You must n't, my dear, take this wholly for gospel," held his little daughter enthralled. His tales got a grip of her imagination none the less, the mystery of the house lending them colour,

and she chose to believe in the Ill-wishing Duchess of Oswestry, who knew how to cast spells, and in the Hildebrand Dormoral, much farther back, whose spirit had lodged in the cedar and had to be "laid."

The Duchess affected her most, and when a day came, as it came at this time, on which she saw suddenly the notable likeness that, child as she was, she bore to the portrait that hung in the gallery, the Duchess's influence became a thing that might have to be reckoned with. She hung about the picture, thinking of all that her father had told her of one whose enmity it was unwise to incur.

It was not many days after the encounter with Lady Malmsey outside the bank at Uncton that there broke over the valley a storm of very considerable severity. Clouds rolled up over the hills and obscured them. The autumn afternoon grew rapidly dark. Jezebel sat at her tea in the library at Hinton Dormoral and turned the leaves of an old book on magic and the black arts, which was a favourite with her for its mystery and its heavy black wood-cuts, and the fact that it was supposed to have belonged to her "ill-wishing" ancestress. In the wide grate, though summer was barely over, a fire leaped and danced. Its rays, leaping and dancing in turn on the silver and porcelain of the tea-table and all shining surfaces, flickered on the pages of Jezebel's book, and set the rough figures in the plates that "embellished" it leaping and dancing as well. Satan on the peak of a mountain and directing the havoc of a storm seemed animate. To this print the child turned again and again. She sat on a stool by the hearth with her cup of milk, just tinged with tea at her urgent request, and her plate of thick bread and butter in front of her, and, absorbed in the picture, made nevertheless a hearty meal. She needed no coaxing to eat, and on the whole she was satisfied with the simple fare Mrs. Weston saw fit to apportion to her. Just, however, as the last of the bread and butter disappeared and her

father was about to give himself the pleasure of pampering her with cake, the first flash of lightning, zigzagging in the sky, filled the room for an instant with fervent light. It was as if the pictured thing she had been looking at had taken sudden reality. The storm had crept up with rapidity. Jezebel flew to a window. Lord Dormoral, with some vague instinct, it might be, of affording her protection, followed her thither and took up his position beside her.

The clouds that enveloped the hills were the colour of bloom on a grape. An angry light was in the west, and elsewhere the heavens were sullen and menacing. The peal of thunder that rattled and crashed overhead seemed to shake the building to its foundations. Jezebel's "Oh!" was long-drawn-out. She pressed her face to the glass.

"Don't flatten your nose," said Lord Dormoral; "and, speaking of boots, I should have thought it too chilly for thunder."

Jezebel clutched him with "Look! look!" as a second flash tore the sky, ripping it in jagged cuts, as one who hacks at a skin or a garment with a frenzied knife. The wounded firmament gave forth its roar of quick fury. The clouds seemed massing still, the piling of them thicker, deeper, higher, and from nowhere there rose a sudden wind that set the casement rattling and caught up the leaves and the twigs on the terrace and, sweeping them together, whirled them against the panes in eddying spirals. The lightnings were malignant. Satan's lightnings on the peak of the mountain were lightnings like these. *That* was a flash, if you like! She exhorted her father to listen. Wasn't that splendid? She had felt it right down in her chest; and she did love a storm; didn't he?

"I think of my trees," said Lord Dormoral.

Jezebel, still at an age at which questions came glibly to her tongue, asked him why.

He dreaded to hear that a tree had been struck. Little

stupid, of course it would matter! Some of the oaks in the park were two or three hundred years old. There were no such oaks in the county, except, perhaps, at Warbeck, where they put the house to shame with their age — great flaring red barrack!

"Are they fond of their oaks?"

"*Her* great pride," said Lord Dormoral, with indicative emphasis.

Jezebel pondered. The storm did not abate, but the rain was delayed.

"Then she'd mind very much if one of them was struck?" she said presently.

"Lady Malmsey?"

"Yes, Malmsey woman."

"'Malmsey woman'! Who called her that? Your Aunt Dexter, I'll be bound. She ought to be ashamed of herself."

"I know," said Miss Dexter from the hearth. "I know, but I'm not. My niece must just take her aunt as she finds her. I'm too old to change. On the subject of Warbeck, moreover, she and I are of a mind."

Jezebel slid from her perch on the sill, and made for the door. Her father asked her where she was off to.

"Oh . . . only upstairs," she replied, and was gone — to join Weston he supposed, in the nursery.

. . . . . .

That evening, however, a strange story was told at the George the Fourth. The father of Bethesda's giggling friend, Bessy Wilson up at Raff'th, a son of the soil, had sheltered during the storm in the disused kennels in the park where former Dormorals (Mad Dormoral among them, who was a sportsman if he was a ne'er-do-well), had kept their hounds, and had to tell of something at dusk on the eastern battlement of the tower. The thing, whatever it was, had streaming hair; stood, with arms which he described as "all of a wallop," — like those of a man putting dogs into covert, only t'other way up, — on the edge of

the parapet; and seemed by its gestures to be pointing the storm. "Splayfoot" Wilson, to a thrilled audience (and many replenishings of his glass), gave minute accounts of his sensations: how he might have been knocked down with a feather, how his knees had fairly trembled, and his blood had run cold. First there had been the tower tenantless: "that there danged tower" he called it, and, as he said, "W'out a soul to it nigh or aby"; then, on the battlement, the figure cut out on the sky, like the dead fir they all knew on the rock known as Wummet's. He launched into eloquence on the subject of the tower. Every one knew, he said darkly. Why, it had stood, he'd heard times and again, from heathenish days; some said it was cemented with blood; underneath it, anyway, there were dungeons where men had been starved to their deaths. He himself (his father had told him) could speak to the bones of a woman having been found, built up in one of the walls, when the structure was undergoing repair.

He emptied his glass, and was offered another.

That induced him to say that he had been out in many bad storms, but never a storm like to-day's. It was generally conceded that it had been pretty baddish. Daniel Harbury remembered one worse — just one: the year, nay, the day that his lordship brought home the bride who had ended by leaving him, and the spire of the parish church at Uncton was struck. Ah, Hinton Dormoral was under a curse — small doubt of that. There were tales to be told. The Ill-wishing Duchess was cited as the Lady Dormoral who had dabbled in witchcraft and gone to Court in a strange capacity. Daniel Harbury had heard tell of her, and could tell. It might not be for nothing that wives left the roof of their husbands and their offspring received names of ill savour. What Splayfoot Wilson had seen was doubtless the Dormorals' familiar.

Whatever it was, its evil properties increased with the interest displayed in their recital.

"If you'll believe me," said he who had seen it, and emptied his glass, looking defiantly (though with a bend in the knee) at his audience, as if he challenged contradiction, and would like to face the man who should meet his assertion with discredit — "if you'll believe me, lightnin's flashed out of its eyes like what Parson Barnstaple reads to us about in Revelations."

No one contradicted him, but neither was his glass refilled.

The hour was late; the George early. The party broke up, Bessy Wilson, proud as she might be of her distinguished parent, seeing to it, in the interests of the morrow, that he did not go on to the Post-Chaise, which had a fuller licence, and whither a member or two of the community cordially invited him to adjourn.

"No, no," she said firmly; "Father's talked quite enough for one evening" (and ignored all that had accompanied his talking so gratefully). "He's got to be up in the morning. Say good-night, Father, and come along home. There's that old tower we've got to pass, and perhaps she's about yet. It's a night for them as can't rest in the grave."

Her father, emboldened by copious strong waters and the effect of the air upon him, said, "Let her come"; and asked, "Who was afraid?"

Still he suffered himself to be persuaded, and Bessy started on her task (it was nightly) of seeing him home. The way lay through moonlight and blackness on this occasion. The tower of Hinton Dormoral stood up bare and bleak above the sombre pile. The moon shone through quick-moving clouds, so that her light seemed to be blown about by the wind and shadows chased each other over the silent park. A window or so showed illumination. The tower was black within.

Bessy Wilson was frightened, and to rally her courage she asked her father what he really supposed he had seen.

Their path lay now not far from the tower. Splayfoot Wilson broke out into choler. What had he seen? What had he seen? Was she gone daft on a sudden? He had spent the night telling every one what he had seen.

"Well, there's nothing there now," she declared, and still for her own encouragement; for she was as superstitious as he, though she had more education.

"Of course there's nothing there now," said her father; and asked did she think that "them from below" had nothing to do but to "haunt."

"They've their times and their seasons," he said as one who should know, and added with pride that it was not all had the gift "for to see them — not even at such."

Bessy here gave a cry and clung to him. "Lord save us, what's that?" she said faintly.

The moon was behind a thick cloud. A light flashed plainly from one of the narrow slits in the tower. The darkness made it visible. The father and daughter stood still, and before their fascinated gaze there passed the vision of the light through the next and the next, and then, the moon emerging at the same moment, of a figure, such as Splayfoot Wilson had described but minus the lightnings, standing out on the parapet.

Had they waited to watch (which they did not in fear), they would have seen the white thing on the tower lift a ponderous cylindrical instrument to one eye, and go through many apparently futile operations therewith, before disappearing as it had come.

. . . . . .

Jezebel had a cold next day for which Mrs. Weston found it hard to account. The child had neither got wet, to her nurse's knowledge, nor been exposed to draughts; yet here she was with something approaching a "chill" and the quick-rising pulse of the young. Jezebel, looking resigned, unastonished, and reticent, was kept to her bed and was physicked. A doctor was summoned from

Uncton, who pronounced little the matter, prescribed quiet and a cooling mixture, and said we should soon be ourself again. Jezebel had never been other than Jezebel, and she chuckled much as Miss Dexter in like case might have chuckled. She chatted with her visitor in all friendliness; talked of the storm; asked if he had heard of much damage.

The thing seemed to interest her. Lord Dormoral sat with her, read to her, and wondered how she had come by her cold. Not thus and not thus she said, answering his suggestions.

Then: "You have n't heard yet of anything struck by the lightning?" she asked.

Lord Dormoral had not.

"If" — she pursued her thought slowly — "a tree, for instance, was struck, it would burn, would n't it?"

"Quite possibly."

"And you 'd see it for miles and miles, would n't you?"

Lord Dormoral did n't know that. You might if it happened at night. Jessy would remember to have seen the bonfire on the hills up at Weech on the occasion of some recent rejoicing.

"But it might n't burn for long, might it?"

"Probably not," said Lord Dormoral; an answer which seemed to afford her satisfaction.

## CHAPTER IX

JEZEBEL ailed scarcely ever and never ailed long. She was well enough the next day, and a cold in her little nose all that remained to tell of the day's fever. She was allowed to get up, and she sat in the library with books strewn about her and ate invalid's fare with appetite: beef-tea in its hour (eleven of the clock); the wing of a chicken at dinner-time (her healthy plate going for more); and at tea, real tea — the doctor consenting; was she not strong as the whelp of a lion? The day's invaliding was frankly luxurious.

"What," said Lord Dormoral, "was my big telescope doing in the nursery?"

"It belongs down here," said Jezebel sagely. "I should have remembered; and also that when people take things they must put them back."

"You speak like a book," said her father, and returned to his own.

Jezebel wore a preoccupied air. She was as one looking for tidings. A footfall on the terrace (one of the gardeners at work), the opening of the door (Buckram with the newspaper; a footman to attend to the fire), set her ears cocking.

Meanwhile the story of Splayfoot Wilson was going its round. The village rang with it. It was now made sure in the mouth of two witnesses. Bessy's tongue was not still. The tale soon reached the great house, and the more foolish of the servants received it gladly. One hoped no one was going to die. Another had ready precedent to give as ground for such fears. It was well that Miss Jessy was better, but you never could tell.

Mrs. Rumbold flew out at the suggestion. Bethesda,

who brought the story at first hand from Bessy with a white face to Mrs. Weston, was rebuked by that good lady as angrily. Still the house was full of talk. Maidservants might have been seen stealing out into the courtyard in couples to look at the tower. At dusk they feared to pass along the corridor whence branched off the passage that led to the place of ill-omen. A fool or two spoke of leaving. One had lived in a house that was haunted, before, and knew what it was: told of knockings, things that happened thrice, bells that sounded, unrung. You could stand his lordship's humours and Miss Dexter's oddness, but when it came to things being seen it was time to think of your soul and your safety. Some disaster betokened, be sure of it!

Mrs. Buckram came here on the scene. She was seldom seen out of her room, yet ruled sternly. She had learnt what was happening and was terrible. If she heard another word she said . . . ! and restored something like order.

She could not stop gossip, however, outside the house — nor wholly within it for that matter! — and the story got round the county, and people in more exalted circles discussed it.

Jezebel continued to wear the expectant, the wise, and the reticent air, and to ask the results of the storm.

The third day thereafter brought the local paper and an explanation of her attitude and her indisposition.

Lord Dormoral read that a thunderstorm of considerable violence had raged over that part of the country, passing in such and such a direction; that damage had been done to property in the neighbourhood; a hayrick struck here, a barn there, and one of the beautiful oaks at Warbeck hopelessly blasted.

Jezebel's triumphant cry presaged her excited story, and the servant who had brought in the paper stopped to sweep the clean hearth and to listen. Jezebel stuttered

with excitement. It was she who had been seen on the tower. She who had caused the oak to be struck. She had ill-wished it. It was struck. It was as plain as daylight. She had said, "Strike! Strike! Strike!" and rehearsed her gestures.

"And what were you addressing?" asked Lord Dormoral, with amusement.

The thing was a joke of the first water: a child-story for collectors.

Jezebel looked nonplussed, but only for a moment. Well, God, she supposed. He was in the storm, was n't He? And — and great waters. His ways were there, you know, and there was something about the storm and the rocks for the cronies. Anyway there was the fig tree. . . . Father could n't deny that, and now there was the oak. So she could ill-wish like the Duchess, and people had better take care.

"And my telescope?" said Lord Dormoral.

"I caught my cold then, when Didgy had gone to bed, and I went up to see if I could see the tree burning."

"You ought to be whipped," said Lord Dormoral.

"What for?" said Jezebel. "Besides," she said slyly, "now nobody 'd dare."

Her father laughed long. Was ever anything so rich? He appealed to Miss Dexter when she came in presently. She laughed, too, and permitted herself to wish she could think it.

"Think it?" said Jezebel. "The oak was struck. The paper said so."

She was proud as a peacock, and went to the picture gallery, taking with her a hand-glass to study herself and her ancestress.

The servant who had heard was now spreading the new story. Where the old had been told went the new one apace, and in time it reached Warbeck, where Lady Malmsey was mourning her oak.

The oaks here were really notable, and told of the days when that part of England had been a forest. The great tree was stricken and brown; its spreading limbs were paralyzed. The wreck could be seen from the house, and was gaunt and distressing.

Lady Malmsey could not get away from the sight. Her bedroom faced it, and it met her eyes when she rose. She could see it from the dining-room at breakfast and lunch, and when she went out she was drawn to it.

She gathered her neighbours and friends. Was n't it heart-breaking? They agreed that it was, Lady Margaret Arlington of Broom, who did stupid things, pointing out what a gap there would be when the tree was cut down, as sooner or later it must be. Others, too, indeed, expressed their sympathy as unacceptably. Mr. Hamer-Acland of Apton, who had a passion for planting, improved the occasion, and said it only just showed how essential it was to plant and to plant. Warbeck, it was well known, great lady as was Lady Malmsey, was run on lines — to mix metaphor — that were not over-lavish, and the little barricaded striplings that were, and are, so essential a feature in well-ordered estates and so conspicuous at Apton, were to be sought for in vain, or with trouble, at all events, on the Malmsey domains. One thing, Mr. Hamer-Acland said, should be on its way to take the place of another. Lady Malmsey's misfortune would be a lesson to him.

"We have to think," he said, "of those who come after us."

Now Apton was new. Lady Malmsey had wanted condolence and not to be reminded of her duties.

"Of course some one must plant," she said, and added to Mrs. Prendergast under her breath that he was "making bare Apton into a wood."

Mr. Hamer-Acland spoke afterwards of Lady Malmsey's Very Natural Annoyance: one of the best trees, as he had

indicated, and all of 'em old. Young Malmsey had better grow up as quickly as possible and have things in his own hands. Warbeck wanted a master. A woman never knew where to draw in and where not (their waists proved as much — ha, ha, ha! — though, perhaps, not Lady Malmsey's); and Gemet, the agent, was either a knave or a fool.

So, it will be gathered, the incident had not made for perfect contentment, and when Lady Malmsey heard that Jezebel Dexter, the "impertinent little girl" of the brush at the bank, claimed part in the blasting (with the curse of the fig tree profanely for precedent), she did not love her the more, though she might smile at the superstition of such as paid heed to the story.

The story she wrote to Philip at Eton, whither at the expiration of the long summer holidays he had returned some ten days back, and commented pretty freely upon the character of the child he had ventured to admire at Uncton, as shown in the light of recent events.

The little girl's action, she wrote, was, of course, ridiculous as it was impious, but its folly ought not to blind one to its wickedness. A malicious and vindictive temperament was clearly exemplified. Very great blame attached to her elders, who must have fostered in her an undisciplined and pagan spirit, besides filling her head with tales of the discreditable progenitors to whom she (Lady Malmsey, who possibly forgot for the moment a story she professed to believe) was told the child bore striking resemblance. The Ill-wishing Duchess, as she was called, was not an ancestress to be proud of, and had qualified, if there was a word of truth in the tradition of her doings, to be burned for a witch. Of others of her doings there was only too reliable a record, and certainly in the annals of Hinton Dormoral there seemed to be a tendency upon the part of history to repeat itself.

But enough of the subject. It was unprofitable in every

way and distasteful to the writer. The Dormorals were undesirable, root and branch, and, if other people chose to give them countenance and go to their conciliatory entertainments, Warbeck, at least, could hold its head high. Her son, she hoped, would always remember what was due to his name and the honour of his house. The dogs missed him sadly. Nettle had five pups that morning — two she was told were black and tan, one like the mother had a splash of white on the chest, and the others, whose characteristics she could not recall, were, she believed, fairly well marked.

They would be quite big, and something for him to look forward to, when he came home at Christmas. Now she must stop. His uncle, Marmaduke Fitz-Rockingham, and his cousins, Gundred and Hilary, were coming to stay. When he wrote let him remember to send them his love and ask after his uncle's gout. The tree, by the way, had been cut down, and a seat was to be made of the stump. It ought to be used for a whipping-post for a naughty little girl (who was well named), and whose father, she was told, had only laughed when he heard of her wickedness.

## CHAPTER X

JEZEBEL, as we have seen, had long perceived that, whatever the reason, her mother was a topic that made for evasion. She had, however, gathered by now, for herself, that Lady Dormoral had "run away," and the knowledge contented her. It was not long after this and her incursion into the regions of witchcraft that it struck her, and for the first time, that she bore a strange name. She was accustomed to hear herself called Jessy, and so accustomed to read of other Jessys in books that it had scarcely occurred to her that Jessy in their case was not short for Jezebel as in hers. Then one day she noticed a Jessica. Jessy was short for that, too? Bethesda unguardedly said that Jessica was what it *was* short for. What it really was short for, her emphasis seemed to imply. Mrs. Weston, who sat working hard-by, appeared suddenly angry at nothing. Whereupon Bethesda caught her breath and grew crimson.

"What nonsense," the older woman said sharply. "It 's short for anything beginning with Jess: Jessica, Jessamine."

Young Miss Dexter considered and found that the argument held a flaw. Jezebel did not begin with Jess. It began with Jez — which was ugly.

"So why are n't I called Jezebel?" she asked.

Mrs. Weston took refuge in correction — but faulty at that, for her *h's* in moments of special refinement showed wildest vagaries.

"Ham I not, dear," she observed, "and not hare n't."

"Am I not, then," said Jezebel — but was even with her. "Am I not — not ham I not, Didgy, and are n't — not hare n't. But, anyway, why am I called Jessy if it 's not short for Jezebel?"

"You 're Miss Jessy for pet, dear, that 's why, and Bethesda just fetch me my pair of big scissors."

Bethesda rose hurriedly to do as she was bid.

Jezebel scented she did not know what. She was vaguely reminded of every one's attitude at a mention of her mother. She plunged into questions at once.

"Why were you cross with her?" was the first; and the second, "And why did she get so red?"

"Oh, Bethesda's a little stupid," said Weston. "She always gets red"; and "Here, let me measure you round the shoulders, my precious."

Jezebel submitted to the measuring. Weston was working for her as usual; and, as her young mistress plunged into questions, so plunged she into irrelevant talk.

"You grow," she said, "dear, every blessed frock I make for you"; and noted a number in pencil, the result of her measurement, on the back of an envelope. "It 's well you 're a rich person's child or you 'd be through your things in a six-months."

"Who am I called after?" said persistent Jezebel.

"And, oh, Miss Jessy, your white embroidered!" exclaimed the parrying Weston; "your beautiful white embroidered, when I come to look at it — and that nasty tower! There 's marks at the knee where you must have climbed on to the parapet. My heart stands still again every time I think of you up there. If you was to have been struck or blown over! And right on the edge, too, as I hear, and for such a purpose! It *was* naughty."

"I know," said Jezebel. "Mr. Barnstaple says so, but father only laughed, so I know it does n't really matter; it 's only what you say to children. You say Don't to them when they want to do everything. So I think it 's best to do things first and ask afterwards."

Bethesda came back with the scissors — Didgy did not seem to be in any pressing need of them! — and Jezebel remembered.

"Do you know many people called Jezebel?" she asked.

"Well, I don't know, I'm sure," said Mrs. Weston. "Not many, perhaps," and looked at her watch.

"Well, do think," said Jezebel. "Were any of the children Jezebel where you lived before?"

Mrs. Weston shook her head.

"It was n't as big a house as this," she said lamely.

"But there were six little girls, you've often told me; and one of them was lame, and could make paper boats with cabins."

"Her name was Lilly," said Mrs. Weston, and began a minute description of the cabins. "Never," she said, "did I know a child so quick with her fingers. They'd little doors at the side; she invented them out of her 'ead, I believe, and she used to make little paper sailors to sit in them."

"Not common sailors," said Jezebel, carried away in a moment in spite of herself; "they'd be before the mast, you know."

"Ah, there was masts, too," said Mrs. Weston hurriedly; "and paper sails, and one, I remember, had paddle-wheels."

"She must have been very clever. And none of her five sisters was called Jezebel? Do you know *any* one called Jezebel, Didgy?"

Mrs. Weston, driven into a corner, confessed that she did not, but found by her watch that it was "close upon" half-past four. They would have tea early that afternoon, and Bethesda should go down and see if Mrs. Rumbold could not send them up something nice in the way of hot cakes. Or would Miss Jessy go down and have tea with his lordship? Jezebel, her head, as she said, "full of thoughts," chose tea with her father, and then Mrs. Weston — the thoughts the objection — would fain have detained her.

"But I want to," said Jezebel, "and you said —"

"Very well, my dear, but I would n't get bothering him with questions."

Jezebel said suddenly:—

"There are things that always make you talk of something else."

Mrs. Weston, looking abashed, but protestant, said:—

"Oh, my dear, what on earth can you mean?"

"Mother's one," said Jezebel, "and now, 'Jezebel''s another. It makes me angry. I'm going down to tea with father."

Mrs. Weston said nothing in answer, and Jezebel, when she had kissed her to show that she bore her no ill-will, went down to the library. When the door closed behind her, Mrs. Weston and Bethesda exchanged looks.

"I could cut my tongue out," said Bethesda.

"And I won't say but what you're a fool," said her superior, with bluntness. "'Jessica, that's what Jessy *is* short for,' you says! And why on earth can't you be careful? You set the child thinking at once."

Bethesda was tearful.

"Oh, well, there," said Mrs. Weston, who always repented her of the evil; "she's bound to know sometime. We can't keep things from her forever. It is n't in nature."

Downstairs in the library Jezebel went straight to the point. She began, "I've been thinking," and Lord Dormoral put down his book. He (who had frightened her mother so terribly that his very presence had paralyzed her) was all gentleness with her mother's child. His attention was at her disposal whenever she claimed it. He asked for her "ponderous thoughts."

Jezebel seated herself on the window-sill, whence she had looked at the storm. She could see from there over the terrace and over the lawn, where, did she know it, a crisis in her small life had been passed, to the park beyond and the distant hills at the sky-line. The cattle grazed peacefully and threw lengthening shadows across the grass.

"I want to know why I 'm called Jezebel," she said.

Lord Dormoral was possibly prepared for some such questions. (Every one was prepared for every question, thought Jezebel. Miss Dexter always said frankly, "Oh, go to your father and don't bother me," and we know how Mr. Barnstaple and Mrs. Weston met questions!)

"You want," said Lord Dormoral, "to know a great deal."

"Yes, I do want to know. It was n't mother's name."

"No."

"Is it a family name?"

"Not avowedly," said Lord Dormoral, "though there 've been Jezebels amongst us. Your Ill-wishing Duchess was one if all we 're told is true."

"Well, I'm like her," said Jezebel.

"Stuff and nonsense," said her father with a chuckle, but he was frowning.

She proceeded: —

"I want to know because Jessy stands for Jessica, and I don't believe there are many Jezebels *at all*, and Jezebel in the Bible was n't very nice. Am I called after her? She was a 'Cursèd Woman.'"

"She was also a King's daughter," said Lord Dormoral, and spoke more from his frown than his chuckle; "by which same token there are people who would tell you that she was grossly misrepresented — though into the discussion of that we won't enter! The name, however, is something of a misfit in your case. These things will occur, and, after all, what do they matter?" He looked at his daughter and opened his arms. "You are Jessy, the Child of my Heart, and the Apple of my Eye, and the Light of it. You are Benjamin, too, — Benjamina, let us say, — the child of my old age. And have you come down to have tea with me?"

Jezebel, accepting his words and his caresses, felt none the less that she had been put off with scant answers.

She got nothing better, however, and from that day looked out for Jezebels. There were none; she became sure there were none; not another Jezebel under the sun. That was odd. And they would not tell her. There were no Jezebels in books, only Jessys that are Jessicas. *She* was a Jezebel, the only Jezebel, the one Jezebel in the world. It was glorious. The thing became a pride and an unbreathed boast. She hugged it to herself together with the triumph of the blasted oak. She was not like other people.

She took then to reading the history of the only other Jezebel there had ever been.

"Miss Jessy's so good," Mrs. Weston confided to Mr. Barnstaple; "she'll often sit reading her Bible to herself, as quiet as a mouse, and just as attentive as if it was a story-book or something interesting."

That was good hearing, Mr. Barnstaple said.

"The child's heart is in the right place, nurse," he added. "I was sure of it. I fear it is little enough of encouragement to such study she is likely to get from her father. Ah, a sad thing, Mrs. Weston."

Mrs. Weston agreed with him.

Still there's no fault," she said, "to be found with his lordship's treatment of Miss Jessy in other respects. He just worships the child. It's not saying too much to say that, sir."

"Well, well," said Mr. Barnstaple, "God moves in strange ways. Who shall say but that He may, in His almighty providence, have raised up the little maid to do His work."

So Jezebel read about her namesake and it was accounted to her for piety. Her childish works on sacred history made mention of the Queen as That Wicked Woman, and said little about her. But the Bible was more explicit, and Jezebel sought details therein. She found what she wanted in the First Book of the Kings, com-

monly called the Third (wondering why as she noted the title), and in the Second Book of the Kings, commonly called the Fourth, and also in the Second Book of the Chronicles, and wished for more. She liked the part very much about Jezebel painting her face and tiring her hair and looking out of the window; and surprised Buckram one day at this time by looking down at him, herself, from the nursery casement, with cheeks smeared with vermilion from her paint-box, and her hair piled up in an enormous chignon held together with pins and string.

"Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?" she asked him, and leant from the sill.

Buckram was ignorant of the text, or perhaps knew it well!

He said, "Take care you don't tumble," and stroked his lip — to hide a smile it was possible.

You couldn't play with any one so austere, Jezebel thought disappointedly, and no one else passed under the window. The thing had fallen flat.

The incident was, however, significant of the child's attitude at this time. She was identifying herself in imagination with the daughter of Ethbaal, King of the Zidonians, and storing up knowledge. As an artist, she had a feeling for poetic justice, and the finding of no more than Jezebel's skull, and her feet, and the palms of her hands, never failed to thrill the pious young student of history.

The study led to a certain number of questions, some of which caused Mrs. Weston embarrassment of one kind and some of another. Jezebel asked the meaning of any word she did not understand. Mrs. Weston was set an exercise or two in reticence. "And, oh, Miss Jessy," she would say — "witchcraft" being the easiest of such examples in the gentle art of fencing! — "wherever *did* you hear such a word?" She began to wonder whether in truth the sacred volume was wise food for so inquiring a mind.

"Everything about her was wicked," said her young mistress as the sum of her researches.

"About her?" said Mrs. Weston.

"About Jezebel."

Mrs. Weston, at bay once again, conceded that the wife of Ahab was not at all that which she ought to have been, and asked where Miss Jessy had driven his lordship that morning.

"Oh, round by St. Eldreds and back through the village; but what I want to know is who Zimri was."

"Zimri, good gracious, who's he?"

"That's what I'm asking you: who Zimri was who slew his master, and why it made Jehu so angry when Jezebel asked had he peace."

Mrs. Weston didn't know, she was sure. Miss Jessy had best ask Mr. Barnstaple such things as these.

"And round by St. Eldreds you drove, my dear, did you, and back through the woods, I daresay?"

"Oh, yes, through the woods," said Jezebel; "but I can see through you."

"What an idea," said Mrs. Weston. "I can't think what puts such things in your head. Half the time I don't answer because I'm an ignorant woman and don't know. You, with your French and your Latin as his lordship teaches you, have more knowledge in that little mind of yours than I shall ever have if I live to be a hundred. Now, what'd you say to a game of Blindman's Buff? I'll call Bethesda and one of the maids, and then we shall be four. But for goodness sake, don't bother me with Scripture questions, as I can't answer."

The big room, that was still called the nursery, was soon the scene of a monstrous fine romp. Laughter and screams rang out. Mrs. Weston was blindfolded first, and at length caught Bethesda. Bethesda caught Mrs. Weston. Mrs. Weston cried off. Bethesda took up the chase and caught Martha, a housemaid. Martha caught Mrs.

Weston — Unfair! Oh, unfair — so proceeded and finally cornered Bethesda. But Jezebel no one could catch. She was light as a panther, elusive as an eel. Her eyes shone, and her cheeks glowed, as she darted this way and that. She danced round the blindfolded, a spirit of mischief incarnate.

## CHAPTER XI

Miss Dexter struck approximate truth when she made her conjecture as to the stuff that young Malmsey was made of. Prig was the word she had used to herself, and there were times, let us own, when the word ran a chance of expressing him. But if he was occasionally superior and distant at school, and had even upon a day given occasion to the boy to whom he was fag (one Mundham, a son of commerce and wealth, a Radical of ultra-conservative parentage, and a wit in his way) the opportunity of saying that young Malmsey looked cross under the impression that he was looking reserved, he had soon made himself liked for attributes of very sound worth. He thought of himself, perhaps, but thought also of others; and was truthful at Eton; nor cribbed even, though a dozen were cribbing and laughed at him. He liked, to be sure, what the French call "your eases," and sought them as rights, getting his head spanked at first for his trouble by Mundham, with a "Now, then, young shirk," or "I'll jolly soon show you," and so forth. If, however, he had a somewhat fine sense of what was due to a Malmsey, he was not really a snob, nor, in point of fact, did he often look other than amiable. He was, in truth, his importance notwithstanding, a remarkably engaging little lad, and, probably, were the facts known, did indeed look reserved on the day when he was said to look peevish.

Philip Malmsey, at that time, was in his first half, and as handsome a little boy as you would have found in the school. He had the lithe figure of the Malmseys and the blue eyes of his mother. He had also a few of her somewhat narrow convictions. At home he combated her will and rebutted her views. Away from her he echoed many of her sentiments.

Mundham spoke of Malmsey's moralizings, and compared him to the estimable Dr. Watts. Malmsey looked ineffable contempt.

Mundham said Master Tommy Merton. Malmsey held his proud peace.

Mundham said Malmsey wanted the nonsense knocked out of him. Malmsey asked who was going to do that. Mundham said one of his betters. It was hard to keep patience.

Malmsey said Ironmonger, and was penitent at once inside; but how could Mundham, twisting his arm for him, know that?

"What did you say?"

Mundham was hurting him. The blood rose to his face.

"I said Ironmonger," said Malmsey.

"Say that again," said Mundham.

Philip Malmsey was in pain; ashamed of himself; but challenged, said Ironmonger. It meant a thrashing for him. The thrashing was given. He took it.

Later he sought his chastiser. Mundham, half-in and half-out of his shirt (he was changing for football), said, "You 'll be more careful another time," and Philip pulled himself up as if he had been struck.

"And you're going to be sulky, are you?" said Mundham. He expanded his well-developed young chest. "Then get out of my way."

It must have cost the proud little boy something, in the face of his senior's attitude, to say that he was sorry. But he gulped down his pride and he said it, and that was the beginning of a friendship that, at the time when Jezebel was ill-wishing his mother's oak at Warbeck, was a year old.

The boys had long talks. They had thoughts to exchange once they met on fair ground. The older boy chaffed the younger frankly upon many views which he said were exploded long since. Let us be rational what-

ever we were. Malmsey held things that others had held because others had held them — a reason Mundham pointed out to be manifestly absurd. Neither really changed the character that the other had to his heritage, as the Ethiopian a black skin and the leopard spots; but it may be that each modified something of his friend's cocksureness.

Jezebel's ears might have burned at this period. What Philip Malmsey had to tell of her and her strange circumstances had long been confided to Mundham, when each boy was talking of the things of his home; but with the account of the mischief she claimed to have wrought, and Lady Malmsey's comments thereon, the subject took new life.

"My mater hates the Dormorals," Malmsey said. "She won't have anything to do with them. They 've got a bad name."

"They don't seem to love your mater very much, with all due respect to her," said Mundham.

"They 're impossible people, you see," said Philip; but here, though the voice might be his, Lady Malmsey was speaking.

"H'm," said Mundham sententiously, "don't be intolerant. We should live and let live."

He reverted to Jezebel, the report of whose doings had opened the topic. He appeared to find her inspiring — would like to see one so named. That he had fallen on commonplace days was one of his plaints. Romance died with the French Revolution. Life was a tame and a colourless thing. That, in the main, was why he was radical. The whole fabric wanted new colours, the old were washed out. Here little Malmsey joined issue with him, showing some sharpness for his years. That was all jolly fine, he averred. Romance was dead just because the world was growing so radical.

"Oh, dry up," said Mundham, "you 're getting too

clever; and romance, after all, is n't dead if there are still people called Jezebel."

"She ought to have black hair," he said, after a pause, "as black as ink, and a face like some one in Lemprière, Poppæa Sabina, or Messalina, or the Gorgon Medusa."

"She *has* black hair," said Philip, "and she 's awfully pretty. Every one says she is. I wish we did know them, for they 've a jolly old house. It 's a sort of castle, with an armoury and the tower I told you about, and all sorts of queer passages and places where people hid in the Civil Wars. We *used* to know them, but since the row we don't go there, and I 've never been inside the house, though I 've seen it from the outside."

"If you don't mind my saying so, you 're a precious sight too particular," said Mundham.

Malmsey's description fired his imagination. He was a reader of Scott and the elder Dumas, and the talk branched off to the castles of history and fiction — Kenilworth, Windsor (of Ainsworth), the Château d'If; thence to books generally; therefrom to games versus books, and the things of boy-life.

Thus for Philip at Eton an influence counter to Warbeck was working. Mundham's views of Jezebel, her name, her home, her funny exploit, the petty war in the county, and the attitude of Lady Malmsey, directed the boy's thoughts to Hinton Dormoral continually. It became for him an enchanted spot where strange things happened. It assumed the garb of a temptation, too. It was as the forbidden tree in Eden. Jezebel might have been the fruit held out to cheat him of paradise.

Something of mystery hung about the place and its associations. Mad Dormoral had seemed a hero to him since first he had heard of his doings and darings. The head keeper at Warbeck, a man of parts and many anecdotes, had been his informant; and in the intervals of

teaching his young master to shoot, had entertained him with many a tale and tradition.

"That there Mad Dormoral," he used to begin, "he was a young rascal, he was, if ever there was one; but, Lord! m' lord, those were the days! Yes, those must have been days — something like, too, by all the accounts. (We'll try the Top Wood bank, where we might get a rabbit or two, and then keep along by Posty's and leave the ridge till afterwards.) Did ever I tell your lordship about Parson Ormathwaite and the nine coffins, and what was found in them? No?"

Then there would follow the story of one of Mad Dormoral's many inventions.

"His ingeniousness, your lordship! How the things as they say he did ever come in his head. But mind you, such carryings-on would n't do nowadays. A young gentleman playing such tricks would pretty soon find himself in the lock-up at Uncton, or St. Eldreds, or Cattleford — lord or no lord. Not that *he* did n't find himself on the way to jail once, and would n't have got there but for his dare-devils, as they called themselves. Yes, my lord, rescue, that 's what it was, and the rights of that story nobody 'll ever know, I suppose. A bit of hush-money changed hands over that, I 've heard say. Ah, there 's strange blood at Hinton Dormoral, and no mistake; but it 's old blood, and it 's good blood, and sometimes I think it 's blood like that 's got the grit in it, after all."

The Christmas holidays that Lady Malmsey had spoken of in her letter to Philip found him keener (though he had to conceal his feelings) about the house of Dexter than even about the family of Nettle — the pups that had been born after he left. He arrived in the evening, and looking for the oak, could only see in the darkness of the park that it had disappeared. It was not till the next morning that he saw the rustic seat that had been made

of the stump; but he heard it spoken of that night, and therefrom he asked what questions he might.

Lady Malmsey and her son had dinner alone. The last of one batch of visitors had left earlier in the day, and others were shortly expected. Philip heard some names, and complained that the parties at Warbeck comprised grown up persons only.

"You can ask a boy to come and stay here, if you like," said his mother.

"Mundham," said Philip.

"If you are sure he is a boy I should approve of."

Philip was ready to go bail for that. Mundham was a rattling good sort, and what was more, the best half-back he (who spoke — or his mother) had ever seen, and that by a long chalk. Lady Malmsey smiled. Mundham (major or minor or what? just Mundham — but she would call him Mr. Mundham, of course. But of course!), well, Mr. Mundham, she gathered, had all the virtues.

"However, if he 's a gentleman," she said, "and you won't lead each other into mischief."

The invitation was written and posted. Philip waited for the answer with commendable patience and a calmness, indeed, that in any other schoolboy would have been surprising. In the two days that elapsed before it came, he went about his business and amusement placidly, and did all the right things without overmuch pressure. He called on such tenants as his mother thought it advisable that he should visit, and made himself civil and agreeable to every one. He helped Lady Malmsey to dispense her Christmas charities, playing the Lord Bountiful gracefully, and received blessings on his young head — blessings he did not allow, unduly, at any rate, to appear consciously merited. And (Mundham not being there to chaff him), he suffered himself to be persuaded to recite, "The Boy stood on the Burning Deck," at the current Penny Reading in the village.

There was a great deal of applause, and he received it without embarrassment but also without surprise. A farmer's wife whispered to another that he "favoured" her ladyship, and the words "perfect picture" and "perfect little gentleman" alternated with marvellings at his composure. He certainly had self-possession as an endowment.

The village schoolmaster, thanking the performers on behalf of the assembled audience, made special reference to the pleasure he was sure it had given to all present to see in their midst one who, etc., etc.; and was sure, for his part, that the success of the evening then drawing to a close — and he thought he might use the word success (cheers, and hear, hear), was mainly, if not wholly, due, etc., etc.; and Malmsey replied, as the local papers had it afterwards, in a few "suitable and well-chosen words."

He was a little bit Tommy-Mertonish then. He was under prig-making influences. My boy this and My boy that, he heard his mother say; and Philip does or Philip does n't, and Philip and Philip and Philip. He was sent for continually to say "How-do-you-do" to people he knew, or to be introduced to others whom he did not. He was treated as the head of the house, yet as a little boy, too, and Lady Malmsey exacted obedience as inflexibly as she had done when he was ten or eight or six. He rebelled or not, as the case might be, but, on the whole, gave his mother little trouble and considerable satisfaction.

Anthony Mundham was coming. He wrote accepting Lady Malmsey's invitation with every sign of pleasure, and named, as he had been bidden, his day and hour. Frost had appeared with the new moon and threatened or promised continuance. "Bring your skates," wired Philip, and went up to look at the pond. Here he chanced on his friend the head keeper.

"Not to-day, m' lord, nor yet to-morrow," said that functionary, "but next day I should n't be surprised but

what you might begin to do a bit of fancy. Little Uncton 's the place, though. Yes ! I hear the ice on the Long Water 's to better any there 's been hereabouts for these three years."

Philip (talking of boots like Lord Dormoral himself — but we know that with Goodeve he frequently named Hinton Dormoral) asked whether there was water out there.

The keeper shook his head.

"There 's a pond," he said, " but not bigger than this. Little Uncton 'd be their nearest if so be as they 've company. It 's the best sheet of water there is in the neighbourhood. The lake down at Ettram 's not much."

" Then they would be sure to go to Little Uncton ?" said Philip.

" For skating," said Goodeve.

He looked at the sky. It was clear and brilliantly red in the west where the sun was setting.

"This frost 's going to last," he said. "It 'll see the moon out, anyhow."

" How far 's Little Uncton ?" asked Malmsey, and learnt.

Mundham arrived the next day. Philip drove down to meet him. The boys greeted each other somewhat shyly. Mundham, Radical as he boasted himself, was a little bit nervous. The positions of the two, the older boy and the lad who had fagged for him, were in some sort reversed. Obsequious porters hung on Malmsey's commands with a Yes, m' lord ; very good, sir ; certainly, your lordship. The station-master took off his hat as he passed. A woman, with a market-basket on her arm, bobbed a curtsey ; and a child in a pinafore gave a species of stumble.

But the pony-trap was a modest conveyance, and put Master Mundham at once at his ease. It held some very boyish shoppings of Malmsey's. One of such shoppings was toffee, another a packet of cigarettes.

(But, as Philip said in parenthesis, Mundham, who was big enough, might smoke as much as he liked unmolested. He would always find cigarettes in the smoking-room, or cigars if he cared for them.)

"Jump in," he said.

His friend took his place.

"Got everything?"

"Everything."

The boys drove off together, the porters and station loafers touching respectful caps.

"Well, young Malmsey!" said Mundham at last, and drew a long breath.

"Have some toffee," said Philip. "I'm awfully glad you were able to come. It's been beastly dull, but we shall have some fun now."

"Here's another old woman sea-bathing to you," said Mundham.

Philip acknowledged the salute with a wave of his whip, and Mundham proceeded. What a dook Malmsey was. His guest felt a sort of glory reflected. Here was another.

"Great Scott, and to think you've been my fag. I must punch your head for you, young Malmsey, just to show there's no ill-feeling."

The pony was happily quiet, for something akin to a scrimmage ensued. Laughter and cries rent the air. Mundham's hat rolled into the road. Philip's cap followed it. And in the rag royal that resulted it would have been difficult to recognize the sleek-headed, stately young person of the Burning Deck and the bounties. Malmsey at this moment was neither prig nor personage, but just a healthy schoolboy, with ruffled hair and flushed cheeks, and the heartiest laugh imaginable; and it was thus that Jezebel, driving by with her father, beheld him.

## CHAPTER XII

JEZEBEL was alert as a hare or a robin. The cries and laughter had reached her ears and excited her interest before the corner was turned which brought the wild scuffle into sight. Philip's head had just escaped from under Mundham's arm, where it had been held prisoner and rubbed and drubbed till the hair stood up like bristles. A rug was lying in the road, with a hat and a cap for distant company. A silver cube, which she guessed to be toffee, lay on the step of the cart, and others were sprinkled on the mat at the boys' feet. Jezebel took in the details as the carriage, Lord Dormoral's coachman hugging the hedge close in passing, rolled by.

Her face, glowing already by reason of the bracing crispness of the frosty air, probably expressed her sympathy with the rioters. In truth, she panted to join them. A touch at this moment would have sent one of them (Philip) out of the cart on to a heap of snow at the roadside. Oh, to give it! Oh, but to tumble the laughing boy out and spring to his seat, snatch the reins and drive off (if the pony would go, which, gauging to the chances, she doubted), and be raced and chased in a merry scamper over the hard roads, where the hoofs would ring, and through the tingling air that would set your hair flying and flapping like ribbons. That would be something like play. Blindman's buff with Didgy, and Bethesda, and Martha was well enough in its way . . . but what must it be to be playing with boys, live shouting boys with muscle and lungs . . .

Her father had fallen asleep. She looked back, caught an eye with the tail of her eye, and smiled frankly. Both boys were a-grin in a twinkle. By chance she was holding

her handkerchief. It needed but that: at a bend in the road where the carriage must quit sight of them she let it flutter. . . . She had a momentary glimpse of two handkerchiefs fluttering in answer before the corner was turned, where, meeting a wind (and perhaps as a "judgement"), the light, flapping thing she was holding was whisked from her hand and flung to the hedge, where it lodged. She started up to stop the carriage, but changed her mind, and, with her eyes still shining and her breath coming a little more quickly than usual and her cheeks flushed as if she too had had a part in the racket, she sat down and reviewed the situation. She had known one of the boys at once. He was young Lord Malmsey, the son of her enemy. Even now in the park, that would one day be his, might be seen the harm she claimed to have wrought (people, Mr. Barnstaple, her father, every one, might say what they liked, she clung to her feat of ill-wishing), yet here she had been waving flags with him — flags of truce! What to think of herself? and of him?

Meanwhile on their part the boys were not silent. Philip had found a moment as the carriage was passing to clutch Mundham's arm, and regardless of grammar, like certain connected with Rheims and a tale, to whisper, "That's her." When they had scrambled to more presentable attitudes (Philip running his hand quickly over his ruffled head), and the thrilling moment of the smile and the fluttered handkerchief was over (the daughter of Eve having taken the initiative boldly), they had plenty to say. Mundham was a judge of beauty and the makings of woman. He paid Jezebel's looks unstinted homage, thought her (a doubtful compliment but well-intentioned) like So-and-So and So-and-So, actresses of the moment and shop-window property. Philip knew not either of these ladies by sight. Yes, he did! Their photographs were to be seen with others at a stationer's at Windsor. Jezebel would be better-looking than either of them, Mundham prophesied. He

had been in love twice, and so knew about girls. A barmaid at Slough (a fine girl of forty, flaxen, coy as Phyllis) had held his heart for a half, and his sister's governess for the whole of one holidays. Jezebel had spirit, he was ready to bet, and would show it one day.

Here the more immediately engrossing subject of sport claimed him, for a hare crossed the road, and each boy cried "Mark!" and wished for a gun, as a boy and an Englishman. Mundham went on, moreover, to tell of a covey of partridges he had seen from the train and counted to nine. But he went back to Jezebel as he collected the scattered things in the road, and said:—

"I say, young Malmsey, when shall we see her again?"

Philip did not reply quite directly.

"There's this little cart," he said. "We can go where we like in this. The pony (Slug I call her) is the only animal I may drive without bringing a man, but she'd take us over to — to, well, anywhere we wanted to go right enough if — if —"

Mundham winked and jumped in. But "What's that?" he said, a few moments later, "there in the hedge," and jumped out again.

"Oh, a bit of paper," said Philip. "Come on."

"Paper be blowed! it's a handkerchief."

Philip's face (the word recalling the event) grew expectant. He offered his whip. With the aid of it the white thing was dislodged, and showed itself to be a square of fine cambric. Mundham ran his eyes round the corners and sang out "J. D." triumphantly.

Fate had played into their hands.

They drove on after that and presently reached Warbeck. Here they made a hasty toilet, and Mr. Mundham, a sedate person, in whose mouth butter would have melted with difficulty, was ushered by Philip, a model young gentleman, into the presence of Lady Malmsey.

The drawing-room held several people — Fitz-Rocking-

hams all of them. Lady Malmsey had a passion for her own family. She might almost have been said to be a collector of Fitz-Rockinghams, a Fitz-Rockingham fancier. The Bishop of Mewl and Ancaster was here (her cousin), and his wife, Lady Ann; General Fitz-Rockingham (Ferdinand, brother to the uncle, Marmaduke Fitz-Rockingham, whose gout Philip had been bidden to remember), with Miranda, his dull and handsome daughter; Hugo Fitz-Rockingham, a diner-out and not much else, doing what he called the Fitz-Rockingham Week; and Theresa, Lady Fitz-Rockingham, Philip's grandmother in her eighty-first year, and the mother of all the Fitz-Rockinghams.

Lady Malmsey received her son's friend with much graciousness, hoped he had had a comfortable journey, and that he would not find Warbeck very dull. Did he skate? That was right. There would be skating if the frost continued. Then she gave him some tea, introduced him to the members of her family who happened to be nearest to him (Lady Ann and Miranda), and feeling, it might be, that she had done all that was required of her, took up the thread of a suspended conversation with the Bishop.

Mundham, comporting himself with something of constraint, admired her, was not sure that he liked her, and at once understood "lots of things about young Malmsey."

The boys presently made their escape. Nettle had to be shown and seen, and her puppies (Mundham could have one if he liked), and the rabbits, and the white rat (a buck, but called Emma by the innocence of the donor, one of Philip's Fitz-Rockingham aunts), the aviary, the stables, the gymnasium. And a plot must be hatched for the morrow.

Mundham held Jezebel's handkerchief.

"To return it 's the least we could do," he said.

Philip agreed that they could n't do less.

"It 's so beautifully marked," said Mundham. The

monogram was in truth one of Mrs. Weston's best. "What happens in the morning?"

"Whatever you like. There 's breakfast at half-past nine and prayers (the Bishop 's reading them now and does n't leave out a single collect, so prayers are pretty long), but we can have breakfast when we like. There 'll be skating to-morrow. Let 's look at the pond."

They tried the edges with their boots. It was too dark to see much. Malmsey slid on it to be called off for a young fool by Mundham, who presently followed, however. They ran here and there sliding, till an ominous crack sent them both to the bank.

"It 'll be all right after one more night," said Philip, "and look here, to-morrow I vote . . . "

What he voted was carried, with the result that eight o'clock saw the boys at their breakfast — nine, in the pony cart.

"You 've put in the lunch?"

"Yes, your lordship."

"And the skates?" The skates were in too.

Jezebel, for all that her eyes were clear and bright and her cheeks proclaimed ruddy health, came in from the drive with her father, a child without an appetite. The sight of the happy scuffle stuck in her mind. She had no intimate friends of her own age. Hinton Dormoral was too far from such houses as held children for that running in and out which fosters friendship among the young. There may have been other reasons, too, for her comparative isolation. She went to an intermittent birthday party or picnic at Apton where the boys, with the exception of the eldest, were too small for her, or Weech, where the family was one of girls, or Flack or Ortolan, and upon two occasions had entertained a limited number of her acquaintances at Hinton Dormoral. But she had none of the constant companionship of other children such as falls as

a matter of course to the lot of most girls and boys. Away from home Weston kept an eye on her making of friends. She was a Dexter of Hinton Dormoral, she must remember at the seaside, where most other people were Goodness knows Who and of Heaven knows Where. You could not hobnob with "such." It was as it is with kings and queens, and one of the privileges of high birth. She ought to be proud that it was so.

So Jezebel, the exuberant tussle in her mind, felt she had looked upon life, and was as one who had seen freedom through bars. She panted and sighed, and ate little to speak of at tea.

Mrs. Weston was quick to observe her.

Nothing was the matter, Jezebel averred; she was only not hungry.

"Well, that is n't like you, my dear."

"One can't be like one's self always," said Jezebel.

Nor in truth was she quite like the usual Jezebel for the rest of the day.

She pushed her plate from her and went to the window, where she got under the blind, and thus hidden from sight she looked out into the semi-darkness of the park. The landscape was white with the snow that had fallen before the frost set in. The trees stood out thence as black patches. Just below where she stood light was thrown on to the terrace from the window of the housekeeper's room. Jezebel could see the divisions between the panes in shadow on the snow, and the shadow of the tassel that ended the blind cord. The shadow of Mrs. Buckram was presently silhouetted on the white ground, and the shadow of her hand grasped the shadow of the tassel, and the vision was wiped out.

Up in the sky stars were shining, some of them steadily, while some of them flickered like flames in a draught. There were worlds amongst them and suns and dead things like the moon, and far beyond all she could see

there were others, and others again beyond these, and others and others. Mr. Barnstaple said there was God over all, but father did n't say much about God. Behind the blind, and face to face with space and the stars, she felt loneliness become a concrete thing, and it gripped her. The "lights of the firmament's" distance appalled her. It was frightening that anything could be so far off —like something that Jezebel knew of in nightmare and could n't recall. She went back to the human society of Weston and Bethesda with a scared and a questioning look on her face.

But by next morning she had recovered her hold upon life as she knew it. It was pleasant to run on the grass with its thin coating of snow, into which the footsteps sank crisply and cut their shape cleanly. Jezebel ran here and there with the dogs, and left tracks that delighted her when she looked back. Points glittered in the whiteness like diamonds where the sunlight caught them. In the trees every twig carried its little frozen load. The air was still, and Jezebel took her breaths deeply and with a sense of pleasure.

In the stillness sounds were well defined, and were audible at long ranges. The whistle of an engine came over the snow from Uncton and the noise of shunting. The cawing of rooks was a sound that seemed permanent. The gun of a keeper was to be heard now and then from the fields or the woods. The striking of the church clock in the village was sharp and sudden. Jezebel counted the strokes. As if to check the number, the clock on the stables behind her repeated it.

Then it was that another sound made itself heard — voices. The dogs that for the last few moments had been walking quietly at the heels of their mistress, who had stayed her running to rest, bounded forward and broke into loud barking. She called them in vain, and waited till the cause of their excitement should appear over the

brow of the hill, where the drive sloped down to the lodge. The voices shaped words — "Get on, you old cow . . . She's not a bit tired, she's good for another twenty miles." Then "a fine park" (a different voice). . . "Suppose we don't see her!" "Suppose we do!" "Well, that's what we've come for. Is it much further?" . . . "Half a mile — not so much. You'll see the house in a moment and the tower. Shut your row." (The last words, perhaps, to the dogs.) A pony's head and the top of two caps appeared in order to Jezebel. The first voice began to say something, of which the initial words were, "Through the trees —" and broke off.

Philip Malmsey and Anthony Mundham exchanged rapid glances. Jezebel was standing at the edge of the drive. It was they and not she whom shyness held for a moment. Through the grip of it Philip took in the details of the picture before him. Her hands were behind her, and the lines of her straight form were thrown out boldly by the snow, which laid stress also upon the blackness of her rippling hair. He thought vaguely of the child in the fairy story whose mother had wished she should be like snow, ebony, and blood. The ebony and blood were here (her lips were red as cherries), perhaps the snow, too; but for the snow!

He recovered himself.

"You are Miss Dexter, I think," he said; and Jezebel, wanting sorely to laugh, gave a grave little nod.

"I am Jezebel Dexter," she said. The pony sniffed at the snow. There was a brief pause. "I know who you are," she added, feeling that some one should speak. "You're Lord Malmsey."

"This," said Philip, "is my friend Mund — Mr. Mundham." Mundham took off his cap again.

"We've met before, I think," said Jezebel, "only you didn't look quite like this. You weren't exactly so — so tidy."

"I'm afraid we were ragging," said Mundham, with schoolboy apology.

Jezebel felt the oldest of the three.

"You looked as if you were having great fun," she said.

Her eyes sparkled at her thoughts and the sight in retrospect. She met the eyes of the two boys severally, and she burst into laughter in which they both joined.

"Oh," she said, "you did look so funny. You," pointing a finger at Philip, "looked funnier than he did. Your head was like a hedgehog. I beg your pardon; but I can't help it, it was."

Her laughter, like all laughter of beautiful sound, was infectious. The more she laughed, the more laughed they.

"Oh," she said, and laughed the words rather than spoke them, "you *were* so funny. I did so want to see you tumble out. I thought you would when I first saw you, but you did n't. Why did n't you push him?"

"I — was arriving, you see," said Mundham, to whom the last words were addressed with a sudden straight look that thrilled him. "It would n't have been quite the way to treat one's host. I was punching his head as it was."

"I know," said Jezebel. "It was glorious."

"We have n't explained our errand," said Philip.

"You lost something," said Mundham.

"My handkerchief." Jezebel blushed very red.

"We have brought it to you."

Jezebel remembered some words she had heard on the still air before the pony appeared at the top of the rise, and would not have been a woman in embryo if she had not applied them.

## CHAPTER XIII

Any one watching the group at the top of the hill in the park would have seen the pony turned presently and the cart disappear. But the watcher would also have seen at the moment of parting the brisk nod and wave of the hand that pass between folk who expect to meet again shortly.

Jezebel sped to the house to lay siege to her father. She had heard there was skating at Little Uncton and wanted to skate. Lord Dormoral rang up Buckram and told him to make inquiries as to the state of the ice. The report he brought back from the stables, where somehow such information was always forthcoming, was satisfactory. The ice had been pronounced thoroughly safe on the evening before (the Long-Water was known to be shallow), and the lake was thrown open for skating.

Jezebel, who was endowed with a large capacity for enjoyment, chafed to be off. Weston was bidden to take her, and soon the two, with a groom and a luncheon-basket, were on their way.

Philip Malmsey and his friend were on the lookout for her, but with tact and discretion forbore to join her at once. She saw none the less that she was to have two cavaliers. Her spirits rose high. So much — buoyant spirits — she had to her heritage with whatever else besides, and under circumstances more genial and ordinary than those which had attended her birth, and given fortunes more auspicious than those which followed her house, she must have been assured a life of notable well-being. She was, as things were, by no means ill-equipped for aught of strife that fate might have in store for her.

She shot away from the bank like a shaft from a bow.

Six weeks of continuous frost in the winter before — the pond in the park her school, and one of the gardeners, a skater of local celebrity, her instructor — had enabled Jezebel, with a natural aptitude for such sports as demanded suppleness of body and limb, alertness, nerve, and the like, to attain to a very respectable proficiency in elementary skating. She was like a bird skimming lightly the surface of water. As soon as might be the boys joined her.

Then did the hours of the day fly on magic wings, Jezebel and the two lads on feet that were winged as the hours. Mrs. Weston looked on and found herself in a different situation. She was well pleased enough that her charge should make friends with social equals, but puckered her forehead over the thought of the relations existing between Warbeck and Hinton Dormoral.

There were many people skating. Ortolan and Weech were represented by parties. Lady Margaret Arlington had come from Broom, bringing what skaters were with her. There would be talk, of course. People always asked who Jezebel was, Mrs. Weston thought proudly. Child as she was, she was of the type that you don't overlook, and it was inevitable, thought the faithful attendant, that, when she skated with young Lord Malmsey and his friend as she did most of the time, the fact should come in for its share of comment. Mischief might be brewing for some one, and Mrs. Weston could not determine her attitude. Her young mistress's obvious contentment, however, stayed her interference, and she eased her conscience afterwards by a word or two on the way home.

"How did you get to know them, my dear?"

"To know who?" said innocent Jezebel, careless of grammar.

"His lordship and the other young gentleman."

"I smiled at them," said Jezebel frankly.

Mrs. Weston professed herself shocked.

"I don't know as I ought to let you skate with 'em," she said.

"Oh, well, Didgy dear, I didn't exactly *only* smile at them. I lost my handkerchief, you see, and they found it."

Mrs. Weston shook a doubtful head.

"We're not at the sea," said Jezebel with seeming irrelevance.

Mrs. Weston conceded the truth of that statement.

"And they are not Goodness-knows-whos of Heaven-knows-wheres," added Jezebel.

"My dear," said Mrs. Weston, "I know only too well who one of them is (the other's his friend), and so do you, and I've my duty to your noble father to think of; and the oak and all, which I think you've forgot, and her ladyship's rudeness to your aunt."

Jezebel said that was different.

"I've only got to hate *her*," she said. "Aunt Dexter said so. And I hate her, and I'm glad I blasted her oak so long as it *is* hers."

This started a thought which found expression the next day when, skating between the two boys with a hand to each, she made strides in her friendship.

"You are my two friends, are n't you?" she said affectionately.

They swore it.

"I want to tell you something," she said to Mundham.

"And me," said Malmsey.

Jezebel shook her head.

"You see it's about you," she said.

"And something you can't tell me? That's unkind."

"Oh, it's nothing unkind. It's because it is n't that I can't tell you. *He* can tell you afterwards. I want him to."

Malmsey dropped her hand and skated on a few paces ahead.

"It 's only that I want him to know that I did n't ill-wish *him*," said Jezebel hurriedly. "And I would n't have done it if I 'd stopped to think that the oak would be his really in time, so I 'm sorry. Do you think he minded? I should like him to know that I 'm sorry. I like him *awfully;* don't you? I like him better than any one I 've ever seen. I could n't bear to hurt him."

"Do you want him to know all that?" said Mundham.

"No, only that I 'm sorry."

"Why don't you tell him yourself?"

"Oh, I could n't," said Jezebel.

"Why could n't you?"

Jezebel shook her head.

"I don't think he blames you for the damage done by the lightning," said Mundham.

"I 'm glad of that," said Jezebel. There was a pause. "You don't mean," she added presently, as a suspicion of his gravity assailed her, — "you don't mean that you think I did n't do it."

Mundham said nothing ; but he smiled.

"I *did* do it," said Jezebel. "I can ill-wish. It 's in our family. My great-great-great-great-great aunt was famous for it. She shrivelled up people 's arms, and was called the Ill-wishing Duchess. Ask anybody. Why, lots of people disapprove of us."

And she spoke proudly.

But Malmsey turning to say, "May I come back?" saved the situation. Jezebel saw the short way out of it and answered eagerly. Mundham had run near to incurring her displeasure, and she pressed the returning Malmsey's arm to show her good-will towards him. Then, too content, with a devoted boy on each side, to ride the high horse she had threatened to mount, she smiled once more upon Mundham.

Lunch was a feast to remember. Mrs. Weston, the thoughtful, had brought a hot-pot, and the savoury mess

it held steamed in the frosty air when the cover was lifted. Philip and Anthony Mundham, invited to share the repast, produced but discarded their own cold chicken and sandwiches. The hot-pot held everything — tender meats, potatoes, with plenty of gravy. Mrs. Weston fished in its hot depths with a long spoon.

Philip said he had never tasted anything so delicious.

Jezebel remembered she was hostess, and said, "Yes, it is rather good, isn't it? but I'm sure the chicken must be excellent."

They all ate with appetite. Mrs. Weston's long spoon was plied often. The hot-pot had seemed inexhaustible, but there came a time when there was not anything left but gravy. Then, at some one's young suggestion, thick cubes of bread were thrown in and stirred round, and the spoon came up full as before. After the hot-pot came cold apple-tart, and after the tart biscuits and cheese. Laughter seasoned the whole. The drinks were innocuous — lemonade and, in view of the cold of the day, ginger wine, in which last Malmsey with an inspiration proposed the health of their hostess.

Mundham said, "You little beast, I wanted to do that."

"Too late," said Malmsey. "Our hostess!"

Jezebel said, "Thank you very much. Now yours. There ought to be something about 'coupled' but I don't know what —"

"Coupled with the name of the Lady with the Long Spoon," suggested Mundham, and bowed to Mrs. Weston, who said, "Well, there, sir, I suppose you will have your joke," and looked gratified.

"I know something about a Long Spoon," said Jezebel and looked wise.

"So do I," said Anthony Mundham.

Philip did not and had to be told.

"Here it is," said Jezebel, "so you see you might be supping with a certain person. There was everything ready."

Philip repeated the proverb, and asked what it meant.

"'Who sups with the Devil,'" he said, "'should have a long spoon.' Why a long spoon?"

"It means that you'd better take care of yourself, young Malmsey," said Mundham.

Lady Margaret Arlington, skating by at this moment, shouted something to Philip about "hot lunch," — he did not catch what, — and was gone. He looked uncomfortable, and fell into silence out of which he was not able to rouse himself till he was skating again.

The three swung through the air, taking wider curves as practice gave them confidence.

"I've often wondered what you were like," Jezebel said to Philip.

"We've spoken of you, Mundham and I," said Philip, "haven't we, Mundham?"

Anthony Mundham corroborated this assertion.

Jezebel looked pleased.

"What made you do that?" she asked without hesitation.

"Oh, lots of things — you first, and — and lots of things. Hinton Dormoral, where you live, is such a jolly old house. At least, it must be with that tower, and all the passages, and the armoury, and all that."

"Oh," began Jezebel, — "couldn't you . . .;" and broke off.

After all there was war between Hinton Dormoral and Warbeck. . . . She affected to think that her boot-lace was becoming untied. No, it was all right. She felt it lightly, stooping to cover the transition from Hinton Dormoral and the half-spoken invitation to other matters. She resumed her position. Now again, she said, with crossed hands, the outside edge. Oh, quicker, quicker! Flying must be something like this.

So the subject was changed.

The three breathed quickly with the vigour of their exercise.

"Suppose father and I had n't driven by!" Jezebel said.

It mattered nothing that the words did not apply to aught that had been spoken. Both boys understood. The three were such good friends by then. Jezebel marvelled at the chance that had given the boys to her for companions.

"If I had n't happened to punch young Malmsey's head!" said Anthony.

"If I had n't driven Slug down to meet you!" said Philip.

"If my handkerchief had n't blown away . . . "

"And stuck in the hedge . . . "

"If *he* had n't seen it!"

Philip jerked his head in Anthony's direction.

"Oh, *he* found it?" said Jezebel.

Anthony looked at her quickly.

"You 're sorry."

"Sorry? It was luck," she said. "But I thought it was you!" she added to Philip.

She repented at once.

"It *was* luck," she said, and looked warmly at Mundham.

Upon such trifling chances had their acquaintance and her present happiness hinged.

The second day drew to a close. Shadows lengthened on the ice. The west became red. Humbler folks began to appear: Jerry Mitson the horsedealer, young Mortimer of the Brook Farm, and others. The dog-cart had come, and was waiting. Mrs. Weston began to show signs of wishing to go.

"Now, Miss Jessy, my dear," she cried when Jezebel came within earshot.

Jezebel blew a kiss to her, laughing. Presently she called again.

"Five minutes," said Jezebel.

"Five, then," said Mrs. Weston, and waited.

The last moment came. Jezebel's skates were off. Mrs. Weston shook the wet ice from the blades and wiped them.

"There 's to-morrow," said Jezebel, "and next day, and next day, and next day. The frost 's going to last. There's to-morrow, *anyway*."

"Yes, anyway," said Philip. "It can't thaw to-night."

The thing seemed impossible.

"To-morrow, then."

"To-morrow."

They settled the hour between them.

"And you 'll lunch with *us?*" said Jezebel.

The boys accepted with alacrity.

Jezebel lingered.

"Now, Miss Jessy."

"All right, Didgy. I 'm coming."

She put out her hand.

"Good-bye, till to-morrow," she said, and each boy answered "Till to-morrow"; and then she went home to watch and to wait for the day they had all said so much about.

"To-morrow," she said, and "to-morrow."

But a dinner-party or so was always a feature of the "Fitz-Rockingham Week," and Broom, Philip found, was dining that evening at Warbeck *en bloc*. A man from Ortolan was present as well, and had been on the ice, and one of the girls from Weech. It was Lady Margaret, however, whom Philip feared. He exchanged significant glances with Anthony. Discovery seemed inevitable.

Soup and fish went by, and nothing happened. Philip with the Weech girl directed his conversation adroitly and listened. His friend Anthony and Miranda Fitz-Rockingham, the dull and handsome, talked of nothing in particular. At a mention of frost (he was, if anything, perhaps over-careful) he went off at a tangent to hunting. She hunted? Oh, no. He tried golf. It had never gripped her. Cricket? She went sometimes to Lord's. Might she ask for some water? Thus they talked.

The first general lull occurred at twenty minutes to nine. Warbeck had always its lulls. Its dinners were, somehow, a trifle ponderous. Hugo Fitz-Rockingham who, if he had chosen, could have filled any pause that was ever imagined, let this one go. He had taken in some one from Broom who knew not his world, and was dissatisfied with his fate. Philip looked for instant exposure. With what other topic but the day's doings at Little Uncton could the talk be set moving? The pause measured three seconds, perhaps (but seemed to two people interminable), when it was ended by Lady Malmsey who, engaged in wondering whether a tendency to shiver, which she was experiencing, indicated that she was getting a cold, recalled her wandering thoughts and said, "Oh — er — your choir, Mr. Dean?" (the Prendergasts were present) "you were telling me . . . "

The Dean replied; talk surged like the sea; the first danger was past.

But the thing had to come; Philip knew it. He predicted the second lull (there would be two) for twenty minutes past nine. He was facing the clock and could see it. He would, if he could, have hurried the courses. It was as he thought.

He had timed the lull well, and "Now," he thought, "now."

Lady Margaret, blunderer that she was, seized the moment to show her ineptitude.

"I did so envy you your hot lunch to-day," she cried in her carrying tones, addressing him at a range of half the length of the table. "It looked so good and temptin' in the cold."

"It — it was rather," said Philip.

His mother listened smiling. She was interested in anything that concerned her son.

"I had only brought horrid cold things myself," pursued Lady Margaret, still down the table (and yelling, as

Anthony, also on thorns, phrased it inwardly)—"cold chicken and tongue and those sort of things" (I fear Lady Margaret said "those!")—"nothin' that was hot and interestin'."

Lady Malmsey looked puzzled.

"Did they give you a hot lunch, dear?" she said.

"Steamin'," shouted Lady Margaret to her. "Never saw anythin' so allurin'."

Lady Malmsey, who housekept herself, having "views," remembered to have ordered cold chicken and sandwiches.

Mundham directed a schoolboy's scowl towards the disturbing Lady Margaret. With Philip he felt the tenseness of the moment. Philip ate ice-pudding and tried to look unconscious. Then the lull filled up suddenly, but the mischief was done.

When the ladies made their move the boys drew together, Philip crossing over to Anthony's side. "There!" he said, as one who says, "What did I tell you?" Mundham, by way of encouragement, said the game had appeared to be up, it was true, but was n't. Small thanks, then, said Philip, to dense Lady Margaret, who was a bungler and ought to be shot. Why must she bellow these things down the length of the table? She had a voice like brass and showed as much tact as an ostrich. She was probably talking of Jezebel now. The explosion was only postponed. Still, chance, Mundham held, might avert it, and in the drawing-room the grouping or pairing keep the Ladies Margaret and Malmsey asunder. Philip shook his head. A hot lunch had been spoken of, a cold lunch provided. The discrepancy would need explanation. They had lunched with people. What more natural? But was it likely that the name of Dexter would be suppressed? Improbable. They had eaten of Dormoral bread, and he (Philip Malmsey) would hear of it. The discovery was only postponed, as he had said.

Meanwhile the decanters were massing in front of him.

"Now, then, Master Philip," said Hugo Fitz-Rockingham, pausing in one of the stories he counted his best, "suppose you attended for a moment to your duties and sent on the wine."

Philip, alert in a moment, did so with ready apology. Hugo Fitz-Rockingham smiled and went on with his tale. The Bishop of Mewl and Ancaster and the Dean of St. Eldreds were talking Church Congress together; General Fitz-Rockingham, salmon-fishing and Norway, with the man from Ortolan; and the rest occupied with one topic or another. The boys returned to their anxieties.

"There, if you will allow me," said the Bishop, "I must beg to join issue with you. What we want in the Anglican Church is . . ."

"And, bless me"—said Hugo Fitz-Rockingham, approaching the point of his story and gathering himself together—"if the little beggar did n't turn on His Excellency and hoist him with his own petard. 'If my wife,' he said, 'can't be received at the Embassy, pray what of the wife . . ."

"Weighed close on twelve pounds," said General Fitz-Rockingham, "and, by Jove . . ."

"I 'm thinking of to-morrow," said Philip, "that 's what I 'm thinking of. Have another cigarette."

Miranda the handsome and dull was playing when at length the move for the drawing-room was made. She was always asked to play. She always played. No one ever listened.

Philip looked quickly to see how the persons in the room were disposed. His grandmother, Theresa, mother of all the Fitz-Rockinghams, held court of a sort from her high armchair. Mrs. Prendergast, her forehead terribly exposed, played her part in this circle. Lady Margaret, the Weech girl, and Lady Malmsey were in one of the inner rooms.

The evening moved ponderously to its end. Yet nothing happened. Perhaps after all nothing had "transpired."

Miranda stopped playing; was begged to go on; did so; Hugo Fitz-Rockingham stifled a yawn. He had three stories untold, but to tell stories at Warbeck was hardly worth while. Oh, he thought, oh, the Fitz-Rockingham Week! and looked from Mrs. Prendergast to the mother of all the Fitz-Rockinghams. He was there for his sins, which were many.

Carriages came at last; the Dean of St. Eldreds and the Prendergasts took their departure. The Broom vehicles waited. Lady Margaret had many last words. The Weech girl was fetched by a maid in a brougham, and touched upon skating to Philip in saying good-night.

"More to-morrow," she said, and Philip said, "Yes. Won't you have another rug?"

Lady Margaret and her party left last.

"W'ff, but how cold it is," she said to Philip at the door. "It 's well we like exercise, all of us. This frost 's goin' to continue. We shall be meetin' on the ice, I expect. Good-night, good-night."

The last danger seemed over. Anthony sought Philip's eye and ventured to wink. Philip winked back.

"I don't believe it 's come out, after all," he whispered.

"Splendid," said Anthony.

Lady Fitz-Rockingham passed on her way up to bed. The men made for the smoking-room. The boys were preparing to follow in quest of their night-caps. They scuffled a bit.

"Philip."

It was Lady Malmsey's voice.

Philip stood still.

"Yes, mother."

"When you 've said good-night I want you."

"Yes, mother."

"You 'll find me in the library — I have something to say to you."

"Very well, mother."

So the murder was out.

## CHAPTER XIV

JEZEBEL scanned the ice. Her friends were not there. She skated in a prescribed circle watching the banks. The pony was slow; the boys would be there in a minute or two. She herself had driven fast and was early.

The day was most fair — fair as those which had gone just before it. A thin powder of snow had fallen in the night. Men and lads were busy sweeping. Sunlight lay on the frozen lake, and the ice where it was uncovered shone, at certain angles, like water. Overhead was a sky of pure turquoise, and Jezebel's spirits ran high.

From time to time she joined Weston for news. They had n't come yet? Didgy from the bank would be the first to see their approach. But, "Not yet, dear," said Weston, and shaded her eyes.

"It 's a long way to Warbeck," said Jezebel.

Not a doubt crossed her mind. Slug was slow, miles were long; those were reasons enough.

Still, "They said half-past ten," she said, "did n't they?"

Mrs. Weston confirmed her.

"They said half-past ten, but that may have been difficult. They was n't here yesterday much before eleven."

"No, they were n't. What time is it now?"

Weston consulted her watch.

"Oh, a few minutes past."

"But how many?" said Jezebel.

"Well, twenty," Mrs. Weston admitted.

Jezebel's face lengthened a little at that. However, "They'll be here before long," she said, and skated away, but kept to a limited area.

People were arriving from such places as were within driving range of the lake. A brake brought the party from

Broom. The ice became dotted with skaters. Now and then some one would stop to speak to her. The Hamer-Acland boy asked her to skate with him. She shook her head, and answered with preoccupation and her eyes on the bank, whither restlessness guided her feet.

Weston in the rôle of Sister Ann began to be anxious.

"His lordship," she said, "and Mr. Mundham's been delayed p'r'aps this morning — you never can tell — and 'll come after lunch."

"But they're lunching with us," said Jezebel, in ready objection. "I asked them. They promised. Is *that* them?"

A cart was approaching.

Weston said no. Jezebel went, and came back again.

"I would n't wait about, dear, if I was you. I'd go and skate, precious. There was Master Hamer-Acland wanting to cross hands with you a minute ago, was n't there? I 'd skate with him — won't you?"

"No, I won't," said Jezebel. "I don't want to skate with any one."

It was then about noon.

"They'll come *before* lunch, I know," said Jezebel, who could not keep silent. "They may have been kept late — one is sometimes in starting. But they *said* they 'd lunch with us, and I know they will. *You* know they will, don't you?"

"They certainly meant to," agreed Mrs. Weston.

Jezebel scanned the bank as the shipwrecked have scanned the horizon for a sail. Now they would appear, or now, or now. When next she turned round she would see them. They would wave from the cart. But the minutes went by without sign of them, and luncheon-time came.

"We 'll wait a little bit," said Mrs. Weston.

Jezebel showed the wear and tear of her nerves.

"Of course," she said shortly.

Half-past one brought no tidings.

"No," said Jezebel, "I 'll wait," and spoke fiercely.

Mrs. Weston knew when to be firm.

"Till a quarter to two, and no longer," she said. "So much grace they shall have, and no more."

The allotted time sped. Mrs. Weston was adamant, if tender-hearted.

"Not a minute longer, Miss Jessy. They 're not coming, that 's plain. It 's time we had something to eat."

Jezebel scouted the idea of eating; was n't hungry; wanted nothing. Mrs. Weston bustled about. She was wholesome and healthy to give you an appetite. There was jugged hare in the hot-pot, she said, and there were Jezebel's favourite raspberry fingers. There were some sticks of celery, white as the snow there, to make your mouth water, and those biscuits that Jezebel liked. Mrs. Rumbold had made them "especial."

And "Come, Miss Jessy," she said, "let us enjoy what 's provided."

But the light of the sun was darkened for Jezebel, though it shone never so brightly, and all colour had gone out of the day. Her eyes watched the road.

Mrs. Weston spread the rugs she had brought on a log, and bade her young mistress sit down. Jezebel turned her face, sighing. Here yesterday, on this log, Philip Malmsey had sat on her right and his friend (and hers) on her left. Here they had eaten with her, and sealed friendship with laughter and bantering. Didgy's long spoon had no interest now. She regarded it listlessly, crying "Not so much!" as she saw herself helped. To-morrow! to-morrow! rang in her ears. Each boy had said it. To-morrow was to-day, and was empty.

Other people were picnicking on the bank. Lady Margaret Arlington, not far off, entertained her guests to hot-pot likewise, profiting by yesterday's suggestion. Jezebel heard laughter and talking, and the clatter of plates, knives, and forks. A champagne cork popped at intervals. All

these things made a background to her gloom. She was living in retrospect through her recent happiness, and learning an early lesson of life.

Said Mrs. Weston: —

"Come, come, the 'are 's excellent. There 's no other 'ash touches 'are — if you may call jugging 'ash, which I take it to be. A little more gravy, Miss Jessy? Let me see what my long spoon will find you. Cheer up, there 's a dear!"

Jezebel suffered the spoon to be plied for her, though every dip and stir was an aching memory.

"After all," said Mrs. Weston, "what 's a morning? There 's a good three hours yet. I won't hurry you off if they come; and to my idea, the afternoon 's p'r'aps the best of it. And if they don't come to-day, why, there 's to-morrow."

"There was to-morrow yesterday," said Jezebel. Wherein lay the sting.

"So there was the day before," said Mrs. Weston, with some readiness of argument.

Jezebel shook her head. To-day, with its disappointment, was more potent an argument, or seemed so.

The jugged hare, however, was undeniably good, and Jezebel, health of body dominating her mental distemper, yielded to the fascination of the second long-spoonful of gravy. Mrs. Weston, moreover, had discovered a little jar of red-currant jelly in the depths of the luncheon basket.

"The one thing it wanted," she said. "And if it does n't look like rubies in the sunshine!" she added.

Jezebel had to admit that the day boasted so much of colour. She had strength of woe left — or thought it — to reject raspberry fingers.

"Your favourite sweet," Weston urged.

"I don't want them," Jezebel said, and thought to hold out.

"Mrs. Rumbold 'll be sadly vexed," said Weston.

"They 're light as a feather, and made of raspberry jam just to please you. It does seem a pity. Well, I suppose we must put 'em away."

"But you 'll have some," said Jezebel.

"Not without you do."

"Then half a one, Didgy."

"They 're not made to be broke, dear."

So Jezebel yielded in this also, and, having eaten, must needs have conceded that the day looked in some sort less hopeless.

But the boys did not come, and gloom seized the little girl once more. Gloom turned to anger, directed at circumstance (the boys, she was sure, were n't to blame), and Jezebel fretted and chafed: anger to pride, which came to her rescue at the instance of Weston, who saw how the land lay, and said: —

"If they 're coming they 'll come, and if they 're not there 's no watching will bring 'em; that 's sense, my dear. Go and skate, dear Miss Jessy — right away like the rest. Skate with one and another. You would n't much like folks to think . . ."

Jezebel's skates took wide curves. Lucifer was not prouder. She swung out freely towards the middle of the lake and mingled with the skaters. No one should think that she cared. Nor did she care, she told herself hotly. Uncertainty had fretted her. It was that and that only. Now as the day wore away, and she knew that the boys were not coming (for they would hardly come now for a short afternoon and the end of it only at that), she could enjoy herself without them and would. . . . And would at all cost.

She looked at the other children on the ice. They skated ungainly in packs, and were noisy and seemed to be playing a game. She knew one or two of them slightly. Alfreda Weech had been to her birthday party, and Ernestine Seston and Piggy Hill-Dainton, whose proper

name, she reminded herself, was Percival; and she fancied that the gawky boy with the leggings must come from The Hedge, and the fat girl of about her own age from Ortolan. But she knew none of them well, and how badly they skated. Goodness! what scuttling. There was the fat girl on her fat back; serve her right for her fat awkwardness! And there was the gawky youth all legs and arms tripping over her. But, after all, how they laughed, and how happy they looked, and how well they all knew one another. Should she join them? Or would she find herself outside their intimacy?

For she knew no one well. Yesterday Philip Malmsey and his friend had been at her beck and call, and had made her independent of others. To-day she felt herself to be a stranger amongst strangers.

Of a sudden the thing took meaning.

She stood still as the thought gripped her. It held her in a vice. She was in some way apart from her fellows. She had read in natural history of "rovers" from the herd. She was a rover and the herd would eye her askance. But why? What had she done?

As if to rebut her suspicions, yet eventually to give them all point, Lady Margaret Arlington, skating near with a friend, came up to speak to her.

"How is your father, my dear?" she said pleasantly, and hoped that he did not find the cold tryin'.

Lord Dormoral was keeping his room with a touch of gout. Jezebel thanked her and said so.

"Ah! his old enemy," said Lady Margaret; and was sorry for that. The port wine of his fathers, she said. Oh, our forefathers' excesses! What a grudge we all owed them, and most of us sufferin' in one way or another for their sins! As some one had well complained, they had the port, we the gout. There lay the hardship. If we had gout we should at least have had port for it.

"But that 's over your head, my dear."

"Not so much over," Jezebel answered. She thought she could understand that.

"You 're as sharp as you 're pretty, then," said Lady Margaret, "and that 's saying a good deal. Come to tea with me one of these days, and I 'll show you my parrots. I 've six, and they all of them talk. Such chatterin' you never heard. Ask your aunt to bring you, and tell her that I say you 're perfectly charmin'."

Jezebel smiled and showed beautiful teeth. She was, in truth, made of snow, blood, and ebony, as Philip had thought.

"By the bye," Lady Margaret said, as she was about to skate off, "where are your friends?"

"They 're not here to-day," answered Jezebel, and was glad to know that she spoke firmly.

Lady Margaret nodded and smiled, gave her hand to the man she had left when she stopped to speak to Jezebel, and skated away.

"I hope it 's not my doin'," she said, "for I forgot for the moment when I spoke of her last night at Warbeck that the families were at feud, and that ten to one Master Philip had kept his own counsel as to this little spree. It all came of lunch and the hot-pot. It was just like me. That's a beautiful child. I got on delicate ground with her, too, when I come to think of it."

"So I thought," said her companion, "when I heard you talk of the sins of the fathers."

Lady Margaret laughed.

It was, she averred, rather droll, when you thought of it.

It was droller, indeed, than she thought, or less droll. Jezebel turned her words in a wondering mind, viewing them in the light of the thought that had held her. What if her case and her name were as gout to her heritage! She had heard of the sins of the fathers before. The Dormorals had not too spotless a record, so much she had gathered from hearsay, and was she a "rover" on

that account? Well, she was pretty, and sharp, and charming anyway. Lady Margaret Arlington said so, and ("Rover" and "Jezebel" whether or not!) she had two great, great friends.

But . . . where were they? Were they holding aloof?

The empty day confronted her. Her unfulfilled anticipations and all her unsatisfied hopes ranged themselves as witnesses against the loyalty of even her two great, great friends.

She set her white teeth and sought Didgy.

"I want to go home," she said.

Weston saw her shining eyes and her flushed cheeks and did not oppose her.

"We must walk into the village, then, darling, and pick up the cart."

She changed the child's boots.

"Nothing's annoyed you, Miss Jessy, has there?"

"Nothing," said Jezebel; and on the way home showed a disposition to silence. The sight of the postman entering the gates of Hinton Dormoral roused her.

She called to him and said she would take up the letters. He handed her the second post's budget. She looked through it and gave the bundle to her nurse without comment.

Weston, seeing something of what she was feeling, took up the cudgels for her inwardly, and shook a figurative fist at the little girl's enemy, much as Miss Dexter herself might have done. *She* knew well enough. The thing was as plain as a pike-staff. They of Hinton Dormoral were n't good enough for them of Warbeck, were n't they? She (Weston) would like to show them. She would teach them what 's what.

"We did n't ought to have laid ourselves open," she said under her breath. "It 's my fault. I ought n't to have allowed it. I knew what would happen."

Jezebel looked at her in question.

"It's not his fault nor his friend's, my precious," she said, answering the look after a moment's hesitation. "Her ladyship's found out, dear. It's her doing and your poor Didgy's."

"How yours?" said Jezebel. "It's hers, I know well. I've guessed that. But how yours?"

"I ought n't to have let you make friends with him."

"He *is* my friend," said Jezebel.

Her eyes and her cheeks were still glowing.

But she meant to be just, and to-morrow, it might be, would right the wrongs of the day.

The post brought no letter next morning.

Weston, anxious and angry, waited with tact and understanding to hear her young mistress's will.

No letter! It *was* Lady Malmsey then.

Jezebel was quite calm. "I don't want my skates," she said, "nor lunch. I'm going to drive Aunt Dexter this morning."

She drove down to the lake, having asked her aunt's leave, and was a trifle mysterious.

Miss Dexter thought it was a pity that she was not skating. Jezebel shook her head. She was busily seanning the ice. She drove round the lake. She wanted to be quite sure.

"Now I'm ready," she said, at length. In Little Uncton saying she wanted something — some drawing-paper — at the shop, she gave her aunt the reins and jumped down. She was absent a minute or two, and came back with a parcel.

It held, besides the drawing-paper which she had spoken of (and of which there was plenty at Hinton Dormoral), a few sheets of deeply-edged note-paper, with two or three envelopes (their borders a generous inch!) to match them in gloomy significance.

## CHAPTER XV

Lady Malmsey at Warbeck was gravely displeased. Philip was in disgrace, and his friend, though nominally excepted, as a guest and one who could not be expected to know the extent of the wrong-doing in which he had participated, walked none the less in the twilight of her disapproval.

The hot-pot had done for them both.

While Philip on the evening of the dinner-party was in the chamber of the inquisition, Tony Mundham loitered desultorily about the hall and the broad stairs, and felt like one who has accompanied a friend to the door of an operating room and waits tidings without.

Philip Malmsey came forth. The argument had been heated Master Mundham could see without asking. Nevertheless, putting out his hand, he raised his eyebrows in question.

Philip nodded.

"Come up to my room," whispered Mundham.

Philip was flushed, but his step lacked its usual spring. When the room was reached, and the door shut, the boys looked at each other.

"We must let her know," said Mundham.

Philip blushed redder. That was just it. Lady Malmsey had looked ahead.

"It 's a shame," he said. "I am" — here was a difficult word to say, but he said it — "forbidden."

There was a brief pause. The humiliation of the thing was answerable for the next words and the tone in which they were spoken.

"I did n't promise," he said.

Mundham thought for a moment.

"*I'm* not forbidden," he said slowly.

Philip looked shame-faced. His mother had thought of everything.

"She spoke of your good feeling, and said you were too much of a gentleman to need to be told . . ."

Mundham checked an exclamation.

"She ought n't to have said it," Philip said apologetically. "I told her so. It was unfair."

He did not add more that Lady Malmsey had said. The expression "good feeling" represented something about "common decency."

What was to be done?

"We 're not to skate there to-morrow. At least I am not."

"Nor I," said Mundham; "don't mind saying it, old Malmsey."

"If we want to skate, we 're to go to Ettram, but if not we 're to do something else; shoot if you like. There 's Goodeve and a good many pheasants left, though I expect we shall have to spare the hens, and any quantity of rabbits. If I can't skate at Little Uncton, I don't want to skate anywhere; do you?"

"No," said Mundham. "Rather not."

He puckered his forehead.

"It 's that little kid," he said.

"I know," said Philip. "It 's a beastly shame."

The problem seemed insoluble. Lady Malmsey had hedged them in on every side. He might do what he knew she would not approve of, but to disobey her deliberately was another matter. She was his mother, and he loved her. He found himself thus in a very tight place, and disloyalty to one of two persons was forced on him. It could not be to his mother; it must not be to Jezebel. . . .

"If we could see her by accident for exactly one minute," he said despondently, "or send her a message. It was writing she spoke of."

Mundham from his two years of superiority smiled at this subtle distinction.

"But we can't send a message," he said. "It would be giving her away to the bearer whoever that was, and that 's not to be thought of — unless of course one just said one was unavoidably prevented or something of that sort. Did you — did you tell your mater we were engaged to luncheon to-morrow?"

"She said she would write if I liked."

Mundham screwed up his face.

"So you see . . . " said Philip, and fell into silence.

The fire burned frostily in the grate and filled the silence with pleasant cracklings and spurtings. Mundham drew a chair to the hearth, and his friend leant against the mantelpiece and ran the risk of scorching his nether garments.

Lady Margaret Arlington was forty and held herself young, but was called an old woman for once, and was cursed for her pains. Did n't she know? Mundham asked.

Knew well enough (why, every one knew), but had forgotten or blundered. The hot-pot had done it. The thing had to come out after that. Lady Margaret was notorious for blundering — and blunderin' one should say, at that. No, not meddlin'; she had no malice; just blunderin'.

"We were having such a jolly time," Philip added ruefully. "And now it 's all spoilt. She seems even to have made matters worse by taking up the cudgels for the Dormorals, and saying that after all they were n't such a bad lot, and that the little girl was beautiful. That was n't a very good argument to use with my mother."

Mundham conceded "Not very," and dug a thoughtful poker into the fire.

Philip shifted his position by reason of the augmented heat, and presently took a burning seat, but remained a picture of dismayed perplexity. He knew he had done wrong, and discovery had involved in its consequences not

himself alone but his friend, and, unjustly (and he might not even explain to her), the innocent object and cause of his offence.

Mundham broke in upon his gloomy meditations.

"We have to remember," he said, "that Lady Malmsey can scarcely be expected to like Jezebel Dexter very much after the business of the oak. It 's all rot, of course — dear little kid with her bally ill-wishing! — but the intention was n't very conciliating."

Philip raised his head gratefully.

"There is that," he said.

Jezebel was not wholly innocent. The fact was a crumb of comfort to one who was about to throw, all unwittingly, the shadow of his own punishment over her. For she would be disappointed on the morrow — bitterly, or he did not know her; and not to be able to tell her why was disturbing as the accusings of a conscience. She might remember the oak! It ought, if she did, to explain for him, and to exonerate Mundham and himself. Surely, if she thought, she would understand. The incident of the oak's blasting, ridiculous as was the agency claimed for the act of pure chance, was supposed to pass — was n't it? — for a measure aggressive or retaliative in a war between Warbeck and Hinton Dormoral. She would surely understand that he was powerless. He was not yet a student of Shakespeare, or he might have recalled Romeo and Juliet — the Montagues and Capulets.

Mundham was, and he did — somewhat tritely.

"'Oh, Jezebel,'" he said, "'wherefore art thou Jezebel?'"

And Philip, guiltless of any thought of the bard or design whatsoever to cap one quotation with another — so guiltless, indeed, that had he been challenged to say whence he got the expression he used, he would probably have gone rather to whist (with recollections of his Uncle Fitz-Rockingham and Hugo, and such words in their

mouths as double, treble, etc.) than to Hamlet for his inspiration! — replied, "There's the rub!"

But he was, after all, very young, and would be older progressively.

Mundham re-stated the cause with a boyish "Look here!" Jezebel knew, he said, that there was n't very good feeling between the two houses, and she knew, too, that she did n't do anything very — what should he say? — very pacifying when she cursed the tree, as she declared she did, and as he for one really believed she believed she did.

"But she's a nice little kid," he said warmly, "and devilish good-looking, and she thinks we're her friends. She'll be awfully sick about it when we don't turn up. She's lonely. I can see that with half an eye. She's got no one to play with. I daresay every one about here except your mater goes to Hinton Dormoral, but people don't pal up with the Dormorals. There's something in there being something against them, I daresay (though *I* don't think it matters a tuppenny damn), so people are n't really chummy with them, and she feels it, though she does n't know she does, and she's taken to us tremendously. She thinks a heap of you, young Malmsey, — a jolly sight too much, you little beast, and I shall have to punch your head for you! And she believes in us both like anything, and now we're going to fail her. It's awful hard lines on her."

Philip groaned.

"Awful," he said.

"And whatever the rights of it are, it 's playing it very low down on her to stop away without a word or a line."

Philip was conscious of a certain irritation. Perhaps he showed the impatient "I know all *that*" that he had in his mind, for Mundham said quickly: —

"I'm coming to it. Your mater's forbidden you to do anything, has n't she, and you don't want to go slap in her face?"

Philip nodded.

"Well?" he said.

"Well," answered Mundham, "it's plain you're no good — not your fault, you know, you can't help it, but you — *you* can't do anything. So there 's only me. Lady Malmsey has made it impossible for me to do anything here. I 'm under her roof. She 's perfectly right. I should be behaving like a cad if I did. But away from here. . . . Do you twig?"

"Do you mean you 're thinking of going away?" Philip cried. "Oh, you can't do that. You could n't. You 've only just come."

Upon this the discussion prolonged itself considerably. Philip would not hear of such a thing. It was out of the question — not to be thought of. There must be dozens of other ways. The boys argued themselves sleepy. And still argued. And did yet more arguing. The fire fell low in their heat, and the room grew chilly.

"Look here," Philip said at last, "it 's all hours, and we can't do anything to-night, that 's certain. To-morrow I 'll — well, I 'll speak to my mater and put it before her that I *must* write a line of some sort to say we were prevented coming. I 'll try and make her see that it 's only commonly civil. She must see it, must n't she?"

Mundham, with a yawn and a stretch of long legs, thought the proposition sounded reasonable. You could n't lean upon sounds, however, he reminded himself inwardly. Bed was the word and the place anyway now.

"And don't you talk of going away," said Philip. "Good-night, old Mund."

"Good-night, old Malmsey."

They separated.

Daylight did not dispel difficulty. Rather did it seem to throw difficulty into more prominent relief. Philip sought the moment in which to urge his petition, but

Lady Malmsey, gravely displeased as has been said, and possibly prepared for some such step as her son was contemplating, showed herself by a dozen small signs to be unapproachable. She was velvet and spikes, and not all her suavity towards him at breakfast, nor her politeness to Mundham, permitted either to overlook the reserve in her manner when she addressed him.

Meeting Philip's eye, and then Philip, in the hall, Mundham counselled waiting. It was no good, he declared, and was ready to bet.

Philip said nothing; but half-past ten came, and Goodeve was waiting in the stable-yard (shooting, the programme), and he had not effected his purpose.

"Now, you fellows," said Hugo Fitz-Rockingham, who was a pottering sportsman and was going out too. "What are you waiting for, Philip?"

"Nothing," said Philip. "I 'm ready."

Lady Malmsey was on the stairs. He looked towards her.

"Mother."

Lady Malmsey paused in her ascent.

"I want to speak to you for a moment."

He ran up the broad steps two at a time.

"I hope you want to tell me that you are sorry for your behaviour, Philip," she said gravely.

He had opened his lips to speak, but now pulled himself up, like one who meets with a rebuff. Lady Malmsey saw that what she suggested had not been in his mind.

"We have each something to say," she said, "but I think we had better put it off to another time. Hugo and your friend are waiting for you. You had better not stop now."

"Very well, mother," said Philip respectfully; "but it 's making me behave very unjustly to some one who is n't to blame —"

"That," said Lady Malmsey, "is a point which I will not discuss. Understand me, Philip."

The boy flushed.

"She 's only a child," he said hotly, "a little girl . . ."

"With a most undesirable family history and a foolish and malicious spirit."

"She has n't, mother," he began. "She —"

Lady Malmsey cut him short.

"That will do, Philip," she said. "You will do well to go, I think, before you say what you may regret. If you think better of all this, and feel that some expression of apology may be due to your mother for your conduct, you will find her ready to listen to you. Think over what I said to you last night. Now, go."

The others were kicking their heels on the brick floor of the yard.

"Now, then, Master Philip," said his cousin, "we 're all waiting for you. When I was your age people had n't to wait for me, or if they had, they did n't wait twice, I found. Come, look alive."

"I 'm awfully sorry," said the boy (he had always good manners), "I had a word to say to my mother. You must forgive me, Cousin Hugo, and you shan't have to wait again, ever."

But he fell into silence after that, and Hugo Fitz-Rockingham rallied him upon being bad company. Thereupon he exerted himself. The effort, however, was patent. Mundham was wondering what had taken place, but the boys had not then found the opportunity which came later of communicating with each other, and he also found his tongue grudging of speech.

"What 's over you both?" said the diner-out, at length. "You 're a pair of wet blankets, the pair of you — even you, Mr. Mundham, who can talk with the best when you will, and to whom, for your most engaging appreciation, I 've told, before this, the stories I pride myself most on. What 's come to you, sir? Do you remember my tale of the Doctor and the Shower-Bath, and of the Chambermaid at Cannes, the Scented Note and the Two Hair-Pins?

(Not for your young ears, Philip, that last one, and only for Mr. Mundham's by stretching a point with my conscience.) You laughed, Mr. Mundham, till I might have believed I had told the trifle well. 'Yours, I think, sir,' she said, and handed me the hair-pins. That tickled you. I have them now in my despatch-box, and you shall see them sometime or other. But now — no, I 'm dashed if you shall see them. You 're as gloomy as Philip here. What 's over you both? I declare you depress me. Something might be going to happen. Perhaps something is. Deaths and disasters are fore-felt by the sensitive in this way. Come, what is it?"

But not till the first shot had been fired, and sport cast its thrall over the boys, did their spirits rise. Then, mustard was not keener; and Jezebel, I fear, was forgotten — Jezebel, who was watching and waiting, and hoping and chafing on the Long Water at Little Uncton. Lunch, which was eaten at one of the farms, recalled her; but Hugo Fitz-Rockingham had hit a bird or two, was pleased and surprised and on good terms with himself and the world, professed himself in form, told a story or so, and set the boys laughing. The home-brewed ale, moreover, of their worthy hostess (she it was who, at the Penny Reading, had remarked that the Lord Malmsey of the Burning Deck "favoured his mar") was exhilarating, and even ale may alter the complexion of life for a time.

Hugo Fitz-Rockingham, drinking whiskey, looked at the lads' frothing glasses.

"Beer!" he said, "drink of men and the gods, but my poison! Lord, how I envy you youngsters. Yet like you once I had n't a liver — nor thought of one. Boys, as you value your ale, let me beg you take warning by me, and by all who rejoice in the name of Bon Viveur, that 'to have' and 'to be' (simple verbs as they are) become, when applied to the simple word 'liver' — oh, you 'll know to your cost in good time! — interchangeable: I am a liver,

I have a liver; I have a liver, I am (or have been) a liver. Do you take me?"

"And your warning," said Mundham, "so seriously that I propose we drink to Good Livers." He raised his glass. "Mr. Hugo Fitz-Rockingham," he said, "and all Good Livers."

Hugo Fitz-Rockingham was delighted, and laughed (as *he* would have put it) "consumedly." Philip Malmsey thought of a recent toast (toasts, it would seem, were to be a part of all luncheons just then, if never before), and he put down his glass almost untasted. Did some knowledge of the extent of Jezebel's disappointment come to him then? He looked at Mundham. Hugo Fitz-Rockingham could not do less after his health had been drunk than make some reply. He did so, adding, "To the boys, You boys, All boys."

Malmsey looked like replying in turn and seemed to have something in mind.

But, "no more, my dear Philip," Mr. Fitz-Rockingham hastened to say, "or you make us a beanfeast. We're behaving like a tradesman's club as it is. What was it to have been? The Queen? The United Services? Absent friends or what?"

"To your next right and left, Cousin Hugo," said Philip, and turned the laugh happily; but Mundham, too, had remembered, and was able to guess he had had absent friends in his mind; and so Jezebel was not unthought of.

The meal went on for all that. The boys had amassed boyish appetites; Hugo Fitz-Rockingham gave them no time for brooding; and if uneasiness lurked in the back of their minds, circumstances combined to prevent a renewal of the gloom in which they had started.

So, "When we got home . . . " Philip thought; and resigned himself to the influences of the moment. What more or what less could be done?

Sport reassumed its dominion after lunch, and so sped the day towards evening.

But at home Fate was working against him, his friend, and his plea.

Lady Malmsey came in from her drive with a chill. She shivered and sat near the fire. Lady Fitz-Rockingham counselled bed and a hot drink; but her daughter was not a woman to give in to small ailments, and spoke of her indisposition as trifling. She had felt the beginnings of a cold the night before, and had hoped they had passed away without further development; she had been wrong. She ought not to have gone out driving that afternoon, she admitted, but now if she kept out of draughts she would soon be herself. She was chilly, the fire would warm her.

So the tea-table was placed a little nearer to the hearth than usual, and Lady Malmsey would not hear of shirking her duties. When the shooters came in she gave them tea, and asked Hugo of his day. She made light of her shiverings, to which Lady Fitz-Rockingham made allusion, addressed a few remarks to her son's friend, still with a certain reserve in her manner, and did not markedly exclude Philip from her conversation. But, that the subject of Jezebel and the unkept engagement would be hard to reopen showed itself plainly, and nothing was done before post-time.

"What will she think of us?" Philip said hopelessly to Mundham afterwards. "And yet I don't see what we can do."

Mundham did not see either. It was perhaps politeness, and a wish to hearten his friend as far as might be by reducing his responsibility, that caused him to add:—

"You can't worry Lady Malmsey when she's seedy. You must just take it that it can't be helped."

"I don't see how it can," said Philip, "but I am awfully sorry."

Nor could anything be done for the rest of that day, for Lady Malmsey, having sat out dinner, at which she ate nothing, was compelled to relinquish the fight with her chill, and retired to bed, where her temperature rose very rapidly.

## CHAPTER XVI

It is at such moments of human indecision that the gods, impatient it may be, or openly mischievous, step down from their heaven and take the reins out of wavering hands. All the talk of the boys went for nothing.

Lady Malmsey was ill.

Philip heard from the servant, who called him at eight, that a doctor had had to be sent for. Her ladyship's maid was alarmed. Lady Fitz-Rockingham had been consulted, and a lad dispatched post-haste to Uncton. Philip dressed himself hurriedly, and went to his mother's room. His grandmother met him at the door with a finger to her lips.

"Asleep," she said, "now, dear. A great deal of fever all night, and a galloping pulse. We must n't disturb her."

Philip looked anxious.

"You — don't think it 's anything serious?"

"My dear, I trust not. The doctor will be with us presently. We shall hear what he says."

The doctor arrived, as she said, before long (the "Leech," Hugo persisted perversely in dubbing him, the "Leech" or "Apothecary," feigning faith in London men only — Sir John This or James That; Blank, Dash, or Asterisk, names which he reeled off glibly as belonging to diners-out like himself), and looked serious. Pneumonia was the word that he said once outside the door of the sick-room. He wrote a prescription and hurried away, returning at noon with a nurse and such things as he needed. Lady Malmsey's temperature was then higher, and at his own wish he wired for her London adviser.

That put the enlightenment of unpacified Jezebel out of the immediate reckoning.

Philip's thoughts, by the swing of the pendulum, were in this day of anxiety with his mother, whom, with such reservation as was entailed by thinking affectionate things of the child he had unwillingly disappointed, he now deeply deplored having grieved. He sat by her bedside as often as he was allowed, and found a moment in which to make his peace.

"I 'm sorry, mother," he said in a whisper.

Lady Malmsey pressed his hand.

"That 's my good son," she answered; "I knew you would come to see the matter rightly. Don't think any more about it."

He could not then tell her of his reservation; explain that he viewed the matter in one way at least as before; that he only meant he was sorry in that he had annoyed and offended her, but still hoped to persuade her to reconsider her judgement of Jezebel. The time was not for such an explanation as this. It was a time for nothing but love of her.

That uncomfortable feeling was over Warbeck that falls upon a party when it finds itself in touch with a possibly serious illness. Lady Malmsey sent out messages to her guests to say that she hoped no one would think of leaving; but with the establishment of a nurse (a second was coming ere nightfall), consultations began to take place as to trains and departures. Hugo Fitz-Rockingham's stay, the week which he called the Fitz-Rockingham, was up the next day, and he determined to leave. The Bishop of Mewl and Ancaster and Lady Ann half settled to go home, and General Fitz-Rockingham and Miranda decided to be guided by Sir William's opinion in the morning. Theresa, mother of all the Fitz-Rockinghams, would, of course, remain with her daughter.

Anthony Mundham was the only person in the house who was not a relation, and at once mooted going; but Philip implored him to stay, urging that he did n't make

a bit of difference, whatever that meant; and he agreed to wait and see what the next day brought forth.

"Though I think I ought to go," he said.

Philip said, "Rot."

Neither spoke of Jezebel then. Fate seemed to them both to have taken the control of affairs from them. If, before, they had power to direct the course of events, they now felt themselves to be without it. But they had the consolation of knowing themselves helpless.

(Jezebel at Hinton Dormoral, with the deeply-bordered paper and the set of hurt feelings, had none.)

The day passed lengthily. The boys did nothing, and in a desultory way that was uncomfortable and in some sort demoralizing. Philip stole away from time to time to sit with his mother, or hear news of her at the door of the sick-room, and Mundham smoked cigarettes with Hugo Fitz-Rockingham and heard many stories. The report of Lady Malmsey's illness spread apace, and people called to ask news of her. Mrs Prendergast was among the first, and for half an hour and the benefit of Miranda, told off by the dowager to receive her, jingled her jet earrings in the drawing-room. Apton heard early and sent kind inquiries; Broom late, on Lady Margaret's return from Little Uncton, and did likewise. Weech, Flack, and Ortolan showed equal solicitude.

At the tea-table in the place of her aunt, Miranda the handsome and dull, albeit the handsome (and the tall and the stately to boot), looked strangely inadequate. She touched the porcelain differently; the tea in it tasted less potent; and Lady Fitz-Rockingham sent back her cup for amendment. Yet Miranda did all the usual things. She was not Lady Malmsey, that was all.

Hugo Fitz-Rockingham murmured, "Thank you. I'll add my own fixings."

Miranda would have said, "You're all very ungrateful," if she had thought of it, or indeed thought of saying any-

thing. She always looked particularly handsome when she was particularly stupid, and she never said much at any time.

After tea the boys took a short walk, and then played a jerky game of billiards. The day was out of gear. No dressing-bell sounded, but a servant came round to announce the hour in its place.

The patient had grown restless towards evening, and at dinner the talk, starting from comments on temperatures, took a medical turn. Hugo looked horrified, but it was his last night, so nothing much mattered, and for a time he endured. General Fitz-Rockingham had done a bit of doctoring in the East.

" . . . Used to bring me their sick," he said, " and implore me to heal them. By Jove, I might have been St. Paul or one of the Apostles. I 'd just two remedies: one was quinine, and one was n't. I gave 'em in turn, and sometimes the beggars got well and sometimes they did n't. I 've done a little surgery too. Why, there was one fella came to me with a wound in his leg as big as a fair-sized — as big as one of those biscuits there. . . ."

Hugo groaned and beckoned a footman. There were limits to his forbearance.

" A screen, James, at my back," he said, " and here, take these away."

He indicated the biscuits, which chanced to be near him, and the surprised servant removed them.

" A whim," Hugo said to Miranda, who sat next him — " a whim. They had begun to offend me; and, talking of things that offend, and fires at one's back, and anything else that makes one ill, has your father ever told you my story of the Person Without Any Taste and the Breach of Good Manners? No? Well, there was once an unpleasant person without any taste, and one day — but after all, Miranda, I don't know that you 'd care for it, and when I come to think of it, it is n't a story I 've ever told your father."

He caught Mundham's eye, and he winked.

Miranda looked so handsome and so stupid that he ventured, "Nor any one else," with equal composure and frankness.

"And don't you think, Miranda," he added, when he saw that she had not seen through him, "don't you think that I have quite a shocking habit of story-telling?"

Miranda continued to look handsome; said, "Oh, I don't know," and ate turkey complacently.

The worst of the surgical incident was over by then. The talk became less general (and less General Fitz-Rockingham), and presently lost its medical tinge. But the shadow of the sick-room lay none the less over the dinner-table.

An anxious night followed. The doctor, who paid his third visit at about ten o'clock, decided to remain on the spot, and through the small hours there were to be seen lights in more than one window of Warbeck, and, in the house, to be heard the opening and shutting of doors, and all those unusual nocturnal activities that tell of the presence of illness.

Lady Malmsey did not sleep at all till the morning, and then her sleep was troubled and broken. The doctor's face was grave. Every one looked to the arrival of his great colleague, which was expected about noon, as to that of one who would bring reassurance and relief, and dispense them. The Bishop of Mewl and Ancaster and Lady Ann, on hearing the morning's unsatisfactory bulletin, decided to stay till the morrow.

"At all events," they said.

Hugo left early, and Philip and his friend saw him off and regretted him.

Coming back from the station, at the point where a few days since they had had their scuffle and waved pocket-handkerchiefs, Mundham said, out of a silence:—

"She 'll have accounted for it by this time."

"Who?" said Philip, in abstraction.

Jezebel was now wholly out of his thoughts, which centred in his mother. He had a horrible fear lest she should not be going to recover. The rapidity with which an indisposition that seemed nothing had developed to a full-blown illness, with trained nurses and "second opinions," gave to the past forty-eight hours that air of unreality that engenders apprehension.

"That poor little kid, of course," said Mundham. "Who else?" She'll have heard of Lady Malmsey's illness, and think that kept us away."

"So she will," said Philip, as if the thought relieved him; but, as has been said, he was not concerning himself just then with Jezebel.

They were wrong. Jezebel would neither regard Lady Malmsey's illness in the light of an explanation of their conduct nor was she a poor little kid quite in the sense that the boys thought.

She was a poor little kid for all that.

Lady Malmsey was awake when Philip got back, and he was allowed to see her. She had been delirious during the night, to his infinite concern, but was now clear in her mind. The room was full of flowers (they were everywhere: violets, roses, mimosa), and the sun, streaming in through the broad windows, sparkled in and from the silver and glass upon the dressing-table. The brightness of everything made him feel more hopeful.

But his mother was weak, and showed signs of exhaustion. Even in her suffering she had thoughts for her guests. She hoped Hugo had been told how sorry she was not to have seen him again. Lady Ann and Miranda would probably like to drive in the afternoon — perhaps the Bishop and Uncle Ferdinand, too. Philip must find out from them what they would like to do and make what arrangements were necessary. It must be very dull for his friend. She hoped he was being looked after properly. Philip must not stay in on her account.

"Oh, it's all right, mother," he said, and bent over her to kiss her.

As he moved back to his chair he experienced a sudden feeling of oppression, which he attributed to something which he had seen or heard or dreamed and could not recall. He had had a horrid reminder of death, so that coffins were in his mind, hearses, plumes, mutes, velvet trappings, black kid gloves; much that was obsolete, all that was hideous and gruesome. The thing was momentary. Yet he gave a little shiver, and looked at the sunlight, which reached to the table beside his mother's bed, for reassurance. It brought out the colour of the large bunch of violets that stood there in a glass, near a small pile of letters, which was partly hidden from him, where he sat, by a cut scent-bottle bristling with prismatic rays. Not thence could the sinister reminder have come to him, nor looking on sunshine and flowers could he dwell on it. He took heart of grace from the colour and light, and forgot the strange moment.

It did not come back to him till the next day.

Sir William, the great man from London, had been by that time; had sat in consultation with Hugo Fitz-Rockingham's "Leech"—a man, to be just, of some parts and position; had approved, gone away, and was coming again. Lady Malmsey was most seriously ill, but was not going to die. Mundham was gone, and Philip pensive, solicitous, and lonely.

His mother sent for him, and he flew to her side.

She had been ill but a few days, but her cheeks were hollow and her eyes big and melancholy. Her frailness and the weakness of her voice cut him like remorse. He thought her worse, and would have done anything for her. . . .

"I want to show you, dear," she said, in little more than a whisper, "that I was not wrong in my estimate of a certain character, which we need n't discuss. This was

lying amongst my letters. It has been there since yesterday. I opened it just now. I am very ill, Philip. It was cruel. . . ."

Philip took the letter with trembling fingers. The depth of the border was grotesque but appalling. Philip traced in a moment the source of his strange thoughts. The letter had lain with the rest on the table. He had seen it with eyes that did not see wholly.

The handwriting was immature. Some tenant was announcing bereavement? Philip, bewildered and unprepared, wished the writer could have chosen some other time.

But it was no tenant announcing bereavement. It was poor, smarting Jezebel's silly little shaft, which would have held nothing but matter for laughter if Lady Malmsey, low, shattered, unnerved, had not been suffering from serious illness, and had not, by the burst of hysterical weeping which it occasioned her, been thrust back towards the gate and grave of death whence she was creeping.

"Mother," said Philip, "I 'll never forgive her. Never!"

THE END OF THE FIRST BOOK OF JEZEBEL

# THE SECOND BOOK OF JEZEBEL

# BOOK THE SECOND

## CHAPTER I

Some seven years later Jezebel entered upon the second period of her life on the day which saw her summoned home from Paris to attend the death-bed of Lord Dormoral. She was then at school; in her last term; and a beautiful girl with eyes that were deep and mysterious, and hair not afraid to be black. She was more than ever like snow, blood, and ebony.

The transplanting from Hinton Dormoral to Paris, and the widening of her horizon, may briefly be attributed to circumstance and Miss Moulton. Not forever could her father withhold her from those whose business it is to educate youth; and the year in which a certain unruliness became manifest and reached a point at which the authority of Didgy proved itself inadequate, abortive, and wanting in judgement, had seen the establishment of a governess at the castle. Lord Dormoral (then in fair health, as for some years afterwards) spent a week in London interviewing applicants for the position. Miss Moulton was chosen from out of some twenty, as much for a freedom from certain qualities as for the possession of others.

She was a little woman, with looped hair and impossible hats.

"I'll have no bigotry," said Lord Dormoral, with a glance at her ridiculous alpaca, "and as little of dogma as may be."

"'God's in His Heaven,'" said Miss Moulton; "'All's right with the world.'"

The rest had not answered quite in this way. One or another had professed herself a good Churchwoman and

looked for approval. The phrase Church of England was intended to set all doubt at rest, as the brand of a wine that is safe in the naming. A few had declared themselves Anglican. Some were "Catholic."

"Nor no superstition nor fetish."

"I am forty, and seasoned."

The tone was mildly remonstrant.

"I would give the child space," said Lord Dormoral. "She shall be allowed room for growth. I'll have no bending to pattern. She shall be herself — not you nor I nor any of us."

"I have seen cramped lives," said Miss Moulton, "and lives that were warped."

Lord Dormoral studied the shrewd little face. It had whimsical lines.

"I would have no irksome restraints whatever," he said.

"I should have *some* duties?" said Miss Moulton. She sought information.

"Have no fear," said Lord Dormoral, "your hands would be full."

"They have been thought to be capable."

He looked at her again, as one gauging chances. She met his eye and he smiled. She had perfect self-possession.

"I believe you're a sensible woman," was the sentence that slipped from him.

Miss Moulton bowed.

"Your lordship does me honour and justice," she said.

Some further talk led to:—

"We may consider the thing settled, I think. As a matter of form I shall take up your references, Miss Moulton. Lady George Athol. I knew her mother. She was a Ferrol and married an Anstruther. Lady George I remember as an engaging child in a calico frock, with her hair in two pigtails. George Athol was a good fellow, and the match, I believe, turned out well. I hated

the mother. I will write to Constance Athol, — she had — girls, was it? two? — and you shall hear from me."

Miss Moulton bowed again.

Lord Dormoral put out his hand.

"I should have liked you to see my daughter," he said (the interview was taking place in August at the old-fashioned hotel which Lord Dormoral affected in London), "but she 's at the sea with her nurses, and better there than in this parched desert."

"Miss Dexter," said Miss Moulton (and meant Jezebel not Jezebel's aunt), "might have wished to see *me*."

"She will like you," said Lord Dormoral, "if you 're what I take you to be."

He shook her hand cordially.

"The — the child 's curiously placed. You had heard?"

Miss Moulton had heard. She had lived in the little world we call the great one and remembered the scandal.

So Miss Moulton went to Hinton Dormoral, where Jezebel alternately worshipped her and made her life a burden by pranks that were disconcerting if they were wholly unmalicious; where she ruled wisely; and where she would in all probability have remained to the day that begins this chapter had she not surprised every one, and no one more than herself, by marrying an old lover who turned up from the ends of the earth, whither, in the twenties of Miss Moulton's age and the early thirties of his own, he had gone for lack of gold, and where he had met with good fortune.

"I suppose," said Miss Moulton to her pupil in a moment of peace, "I suppose one would call him the love of my life, and that one ought to marry the love of one's life, if one is but a moderately favoured woman and gets the chance. So I 'm going to marry him; but I had looked to seeing you out at Hinton Dormoral, tormenting child, and I could find it in me to wish I had been undisturbed in my middle age."

"Dear Moulty," said Jezebel, "it is quite horrid of you to leave us; but woman was born to marriage as the sparks fly upward, and you can't help yourself. You have done a lot for me, you odd little person, if I *have* been a beast to you, and I shall never forget you. Marry your colonist and be to him the butt you 've been to me — (I 'm a pig, I 'm a pig, Moulty!) — and he 'll be a very lucky person, for he 'll never lack something to laugh at and you 'll be happy. But know that when you 're gone I shall get me to a nunnery."

"A nunnery," said Miss Moulton — "a convent?"

"No, dear stupid. I shall go to school."

"To school!" said Miss Moulton.

"To school," said Jezebel.

"Your father . . ."

"We 'll see."

And so it came about that Jezebel, having but to speak at Hinton Dormoral for a thing to be done, went to school in Paris to be "finished."

Her school-days, though not uneventful, need not be gone into in detail. They were to be branded none the less on the memory of the good ladies who were responsible for the minds and the manners of the young daughters of noble and gentle England entrusted to their care and discretion, as the days of the epoch of mischief let loose. From the hour of her arrival the girl with the name that must not be breathed, who was yet so well-born as not to be lightly surrendered, had proved herself a disturbing spirit. Jezebel, finding herself for the first time in her life with companions of her own age, if hardly as a whole (nobility and gentry notwithstanding) of her own social position, gave her exuberant spirits and fancy full play. She was the despair of her tutors and mistresses, plaguing and wheedling them by turns, so that at one moment her expulsion was imminent, at the next they were reduced to softness and laughter. But sometimes the outlook was

serious. By her example she had cried "Havoc" with vengeance, and with her own hands had "let slip the dogs of war." There was a term when all was outrageous, and Lord Dormoral advised of her misdemeanours. He answered by post-card, "Well, punish her. Don't bother me," and what could you do with the child of such a father? Jezebel's punishments made no more impression upon her than whippings on the notable "Topsy." She masqueraded with two other girls in a carnival, eluding her governess. She escaped from her room once at night, and, leading a companion astray with her, went to a public masked ball. Scandalous! She had half a dozen young men deep in love with her; played them as anglers play fish; and could carry on a game, wherein hearts were at stake, across church with her eyelids. Her doings were most reprehensible. Nor could you know what her next move would be. Mlle. Piplin had once on a hot afternoon the misfortune to fall into slumber in class. She woke, half unconscious of having done more than close her eyes for a moment, and faced a room full of girls in convulsion. In vain she called the young ladies to order. The more she asserted her authority the more the girls laughed. Jezebel only was grave, and joined forces with her in exhorting them to remember where they were and the respect due to their "pastresses and mistresses," faltering only for a moment when Mademoiselle, who suspected treachery, turned a searching eye upon her. The class was demoralized. A girl or two threatened hysterics. What wonder when they were faced by one who all unwittingly presented an aspect which to call bacchanalian was to choose your terms mildly? Her cheeks and her nose had been ruddled to the limit of ruddling, and how after that, when she knew of it, ever to maintain order again? Mademoiselle was beside herself; Madame; every one.

Jezebel, then, made friends and made enemies — more,

she could turn an enemy into a friend, so that when she was not in the very act of making her good preceptors' lives hell for them and earning a reputation amongst them for being well named, they adored her. No devilry was beyond her, but no kindness either; and when the telegram came which summoned her from them upon the day in July which may be said to have opened the second period of her history, there was genuine regret even with those who had suffered most at her hands.

At home the seven years had hitherto been occupied in killing no one that concerns us. Lord Dormoral, to be sure, his gout apart, had an ailment which in the long run must prove fatal, but so successfully had it been kept in abeyance that it troubled him little, and, to within a week or so of the hurried message that called Jezebel to his side, he had enjoyed good health enough. Miss Dexter had developed a marked eccentricity, but went her way with a straight back and K boots. Weston was Jezebel's somewhat matronly maid in the holidays; wore silk; had grown visibly younger if something more portly; and with her promotion from the nursery to the workroom and bedchamber had dropped Mrs. in favour of Miss. Bethesda was married and a mother, nay, twofold a mother, for she had presented Jerry Mitson (the horsedealer of indiscreet remark, as we may or we may not remember), with twins at the outset. The Dean we can spare with Bethesda's grandfather aged ninety, General Fitz-Rockingham, and one or two others who made gaps in the circles at Weech, Flack, and Ortolan. Mrs. Prendergast was left to us; Lady Margaret, who lived and did well; Lady Malmsey and most of her relations; Hugo; Miranda (orphaned but married); the Bishop; Lady Ann; and even Theresa the mother of all.

Others lived and yet others; but Lord Dormoral lay dying.

Jezebel fretted and chafed on the boat, but was out-

wardly calm. Weston was to meet her at Dover, and she possessed her soul in what patience might be till she should know the worst or the best of the tidings that there would await her. The past few hours seemed crowded and empty and vivid and unreal. The letters from home telling of Lord Dormoral's indisposition had been in no way alarming; the shock was the greater when the telegram close on the tail of the last left the sudden gravity of his case in small doubt. Jezebel travelled with all speed, and the fervent prayer that she might be in time; even now perhaps he was dead.

The journey was to be a clear memory to her for many a long day. She had hardly known, she supposed, how much her father was to her till this hour in which she knew that she was to lose him. She understood him as no other woman had understood him, except perhaps Miss Dexter — and a lady or two of the earlier days, whose names, if they had names, had long ago passed out of mind. She had never feared him. She did not see him, indeed, as the grim and sinister jester who had frightened her mother to her mother's undoing. She knew that most of the servants trembled before him, and she thought them fools and blind for their want of humour. He had the kindest heart in the world for those who could reach it. You had only not to fear him. She remembered a thousand tendernesses. . . .

She was haunted by the thought of the desolate library. She saw it plainly, with its book-lined walls and the heavy chairs with the dark leather, the smoothness of which was one of her early recollections. There were buttons sunk deeply in the armchairs, and as a child she used to trace, with plump and absorbed fingers, the valleys and mountains they made in the aromatic morocco. One chair had always held her father. He was part of the room and was to be no part of it. She saw the room changed and unchanged.

Her life, if he died, and the summons (Miss Dexter's, the brusque) was uncompromisingly definite, would be changed and unchanged as the room.

Her thoughts, in odd moments when she seemed aloof from the personal anguish, fled this way and that; backwards, and fluttered the leaves of the unwritten volume that held her history, with a pause here and there at a page she remembered — the page Lady Malmsey, for instance, and the page Philip and Mundham, the strange pages Jezebel Vindex (oh, the funny Ill-wishing!), and a page or two Moulton and Paris — thus, backwards; forwards, with eyes on the veil they could almost see through. She knew partly what was behind it. The title died out (something of callousness lurked in the thought, as a thought to be harboured just then), and why was n't she male? No wonder her father had minded. No wonder. No wonder. Yet worse might have happened for him and for her (she knew how he felt towards her), and the barony, taking the Castle and lands in its trail, might have been going to some obscure next-of-kin. There was no one. There would be herself and trustees, and, possibly, some one whom the last few years, certain talks with her father and Miss Dexter's growing oddness, had accustomed her to think of vaguely as the resplendent Mrs. Baskerville who was to present her. She shuddered.

She would not look forward. It was dreadful to think of a life in which her father would have no part. Yet life would not cease at his death for his daughter. . . .

She watched the water surge by. Green water would thenceforth hold for her all that she had ever experienced of inward unrest. When the cliffs of Dover came into sight her physical endurance was at its ebb. She rose and paced the deck. Presently she grew calmer. The sky was so blue that the sea, claiming her eyes for very glory of colour, took the thoughts to itself. Emeralds were there; sapphires; the topaz. She forgot her trouble in the looking.

A sharp stinging pain in one of her hands, sudden as it was fierce, awakened her from her reverie, startling even a cry from her. Her hand was bare — she had taken off her glove a few minutes since for this or that reason — and, upon its whiteness, which no sun ever tanned or freckled, though she neglected never so wantonly the precautions against sunburn that other girls took with such care, lay a red spark searing the flesh. The small point of fire which had alighted upon her had burned its way deeply before she took in what had happened and brushed it away, spent then and a cinder. It was the head of a match.

It was also the outward and visible agent of one of those chances of travel that make lives to converge at a point.

The waxen stem, whence it had flown, was in the hand of a passenger who stood near, an unlighted cigarette between his lips and a bewildered look in his eyes, which met Jezebel's as he glanced about in search of the winged flame. They ranged, at her direction it may be, from hers to her hand, from her hand to her eyes again, and concern wrote itself upon his face.

It was nothing, Jezebel hastened to say, but wringing her hand rather ruefully. You could n't guard against an accident of the sort. Really, it was nothing. It smarted a little, that was all.

"It is a burn anyway," he said gravely, and with solicitude. "It should be kept from the air or it will blister."

Jezebel with her left hand, her right the injured, sought her handkerchief. Before she could find it, however, a handkerchief was forthcoming and, folded to a narrow bandage, was being bound about the small wound.

All was done suddenly and quickly. In applying the bandage the stranger was brought very close to her, and his appearance stamped itself clearly upon her mind. Something in the way the thing happened gave it, in retrospect

at all events, the significance of things foreordained. But the briefest while since, so brief as for measure by seconds, there had not existed for her one who, with the day, was not lightly to be dismissed from her memory. By the infliction, all unwitting as it was, of pain upon her, by speech, and by touch, he had been thrust into her consciousness by the Fates and a threefold insistence.

The steamer was comparatively empty. The time of year took holiday-makers and voyagers generally in the contrary direction. The spot where they stood was deserted.

They exchanged but a few words. He repeated his regrets, she her civil protesting. Nothing was said that asks for record, yet a sense of inner meaning seemed to be attached to the encounter for him as for her. She felt it, and believed that he felt it too when, looking deeply into her eyes for a moment, he appeared to be about to say something which he did not say. Discretion, deference, and a perfect consideration of the proprieties — for which Jezebel herself cared nothing — marked his attitude towards her. He did not prolong the incident beyond the limits to which it spread itself in the ordinary course of events, and apparently, lest his presence should embarrass her (though it may have been for any other reason — save one), he betook himself, when all was said, to another part of the ship.

"Your handkerchief," Jezebel said, remembering it as he was about to move away.

"Please let it stay where it is," he said. "You will greatly oblige me. The least I can do is to help to assuage the mischief I caused you. I shall always remember that at the outset I did you harm."

Jezebel smiled.

"So small a thing," she said.

She did not see him again. At the landing her torment, which returned as the moment for the tidings approached,

was too great to allow her eyes to see aught but the form of Weston waiting on the quay.

Weston was love, tears, and brown holland.

Lord Dormoral at least was not dead.

Jezebel waited her turn on the gangway with open impatience.

"My precious," said Weston; "my precious!"

She was Didgy at once, and Jezebel a child on her bosom — one who was not seen by either saw them — a child on her bosom, and weeping.

"Yes, my darling, alive; and he'll live till you come, dearest, never fear that. He's counting the minutes, my beautiful. Here, give me your rugs. Yes, as sudden as sudden. We never thought, nor the doctor till yesterday. . . . He seemed so much better. But if the thing took him there" — she went into some details which we may be spared — "he had always known that. No, by mercy, my pet, he don't suffer. We shall get there by ten or eleven. And I've bribed the guard, dear, and we shall have the carriage to ourselves if it's possible, as it will be, I should say, by the look of things. They'll see to your luggage. And, dear, here's some tea. I told the boy most particular. Yes, drink it, my dear, while it's hot; eat a taste of a bun, too. Yes, they got there last night. I forget their names, darling; two of the biggest doctors in London. They said the same thing. It was always a fear, you see. But we *could n't*, my dearest — we could n't send for you sooner when nobody knew. It came like a shock to us all.

Jezebel ate the bun through and emptied her cup. She had eaten little or nothing since her early start, and had spent the shortened night that preceded it, for the most part, in waking. She ate, and was refreshed.

The two had the compartment, as Weston had hoped to contrive, to themselves, and could talk undisturbed. Jezebel asked for and heard all particulars. Mrs. Rumbold,

said Weston, was sorely upset — kept saying, That it should be his lordship before her, and she so stout, and with valv'lar disease of the heart! She did nothing but cry, and even Buckram seemed much affected. His lordship had consented to see Mr. Barnstaple as an old friend, but not as a clergyman; and, in the distinct understanding that there were to be no ministrations, Mr. Barnstaple, when Weston left, was expected at the Castle in the course of the morning. Weston would have moralized a little, but Jezebel pulled her up. Such moralizings rested upon misconception, she held.

"My dear, you're quite right," Weston hastened to say. "It's as God sees us — not men."

Her eyes filled with tears. Even to have appeared to think that all was not well with Lord Dormoral!

"My dear," she said, "my dear, if some of us was one half as good!"

"If any of us," said Jezebel, "though even that's beside the question"; and kissed her.

So they talked. Jezebel asked and heard again and again all that there was to tell of Lord Dormoral's condition. Her heart softened towards Philip Malmsey, whose mother had once lain in like manner at the point of death, and she understood why she had not been forgiven. It was years ago that. She was a little girl, Philip a schoolboy. But the results of the hostile action that connected her indirectly with the evil at Warbeck were still to be traced. The day long ago when, after his mother's recovery, Philip Malmsey had met Jezebel Dexter and refused to speak to her in the hunting-field, where, since, they had met often enough, had fixed their relations definitely. For two years, and with sore heart, seeing him occasionally in the summer, and more often in the winter, she had hated him warmly. Then had come Moulty and changes; then school and forgetting (though forgetting had come also in a manner with Miss Moulton and the

changes); and, in fine, changes having taken place in his life also, the hopes of Hinton Dormoral and Warbeck respectively were now the veriest strangers.

She looked out of the window. Kent was green with hops and streaked with avenues. The long lines of verdant poles seemed to Jezebel to revolve like rays from a point, or the closely set spokes of a wheel of which the axle was distant and ever ashift. Line followed line, with a brief glimpse of narrowing alley between; and garden replaced garden. The day was superb. The sky that had coloured the sea was yet over all, and sunshine bathed England. England looked rich, orderly and exceedingly fair. It was hard to believe, as you looked at its opulent trimness, that poverty could have foothold in so blessed a land, and hard, too, to realize in the light of the golden afternoon that sickness or death played a part in the world.

Jezebel from the open window saw the flight of birds in the blue and butterflies in the green. She saw hayfields and labourers, a few women in sunbonnets, a child with a handful of poppies, some children who waved to the train. She saw horses and cattle, a cat on a wall, a great cluster of roses on the face of a cottage. Life was at its fullest on this day of exquisite summer, and her father lay dying.

The journey seemed endless, and London, when it was reached, but midway in it. The travellers saw the evening close in and the late night descend long and long before they neared the end of their journey. The last stages witnessed a return of Jezebel's most horrid anxiety. At St. Eldreds, where a political meeting (as Weston was able to tell her) had been held, and the platform, in consequence, was crowded, she saw a face or two that she knew, and drew back lest she should hear fatal news.

A long stop was made. There was bustle with noise. Such people as were going by the train took their places. Others bound for the loop-line hung about the lamplit

platform and discussed the day's doings. Doeskin and moleskin, corduroy and fustian, contrasted with broadcloth and the silk of a hat or two. It had been market-day also, and women who had stayed for the meeting sat on benches, their baskets on their knees, and waited garrulously or with stolid patience. Fowls with their feet tied together took weary stock in the darkness of a world upside down. Some low, flat, wickerwork cases held ducks, and a couple of dogs in a leash looked astray.

Weston, recognizing faces, said there was This one of That, or That one of This, between intervals of "What are we waiting for?"

Jezebel leaned forward and looked from the window.

Two gentlemen came from the booking-office. The elder of the two, who, she saw, was Mr. Hamer-Acland, of Apton, caught sight of her, and with a word to his companion, whose face she did not see, came forward to speak to her.

"You are on your way home?" he said.

Jezebel nodded.

"And don't know what news may await me," she said. "Can you tell me?"

"I have only just heard of Lord Dormoral's illness—here at the meeting. There is no change."

"He is alive!" said Jezebel.

"I knew nothing till an hour ago. I am so grieved. I shall send over early. You have come from — Brussels, is it?"

"From Paris. I only heard yesterday. Nobody knew that my father's illness was serious. It was not, indeed, till certain symptoms appeared. There was a sudden turn. Take care, Mr. Hamer-Acland. We are off."

"I shall send — in the morning. Good-bye. My best wishes go with you."

As the train moved she saw the face of his companion, who had stood back. It was bronzed from travel, older, altered, but she knew it at once.

## CHAPTER II

Lord Dormoral's great bedchamber looked south and over the drive. It was hung with old tapestries and heavily furnished. A high four-post bed with faded curtains, worked with fleur-de-lys by some dead and gone Dexter, whose handiwork was to be seen in many an embroidery throughout the Castle, jutted like a peninsula into the middle of the room. A table at hand was littered with papers and writing-materials. A faint odour of sealing-wax was on the air.

Propped up by pillows, Lord Dormoral sat high in the bed, and, but by a very evident weakness and something of strangeness in his pallor, gave little sign of his approaching dissolution. His brain was active and vigorous as ever, and his eyes, as its windows, were yet undimmed and observant. He understood enough of his ailment, however, to know with the doctors that he was doomed. He was dying as he had lived, fearlessly, and without fuss or unavailing rebellion. He was dying, too, as he felt, like a gentleman, and would leave his affairs in good order. Mr. Waddifer, his solicitor, arriving at noon, had spent most of the day with him, and now was preparing to take his departure.

Lord Dormoral watched the methodical fingers that sorted the documents and, folding those that were open, tied them neatly into packets.

"If there is anything I have forgotten," said the voice from the bed, "think of it, Waddifer, before you go. Let Mr. Baskerville be written to as soon as may be. I should like to have seen him, but as he's abroad that's impossible. About Mrs. Baskerville . . . you're mistaken or prejudiced, probably both. After all, we are Dormorals."

"That is why I ventured to speak. But as I say I speak from hearsay alone. The lady may be all that your lordship thinks, and we know that the world is malicious."

"Yes, we know that the world is malicious," said Lord Dormoral.

There was a pause, and Mr. Waddifer's white and shapely hands went on with their work. The old man's eyes followed their precise movements. The record of his earthly possessions was there on the table. It had been his whim to go through everything when he knew that his hours were numbered, and it soothed him to know that in the things of time he had prospered. Jezebel had a goodly heritage.

"Mrs. Baskerville," he said, "is a woman of sense and taste. She has stayed here several times — with Teddy Baskerville and without him, and she knows how not to be tiresome. I should wish no better company. Nor, apart from her being the wife of my old friend's son, can I think of any one better suited to be Jessy's guide in the ways of the world. Dolly Baskerville was a Fort-Raven, and born, one may say, in the purple — for what purple 's worth! She knows London, likes Jessy (as well she may like her), and made the offer herself. I have always meant to accept it. You disturb me, Waddifer, and it is no time to disturb me."

Mr. Waddifer knew Lord Dormoral well and said nothing. He tied some red tape round a packet of papers.

"Anyway, it 's too late to change now," said Lord Dormoral, and spoke testily. "I like the woman. Her manners are perfect. She isn't hidebound by convention, it may be, but I know of no reason why I should not trust my daughter to her care. Who speaks her name lightly?"

"Rumour," said Mr. Waddifer; "nothing more. I cannot say anything definitely. I need not tell your lordship that I do not myself move in the fashionable world."

"I shall not mind rumour," said Lord Dormoral. "Rumour and I are old acquaintances."

He moved in his bed.

"My girl should be he here in an hour or two," he said.

"What time is it?"

Mr. Waddifer looked at his watch. It was gold and heavy and ticked very loudly.

"Eight o'clock," he said.

Lord Dormoral seemed disappointed.

"Only that!" he said, and lay back.

Mr. Waddifer gathered up the packets he had made and deposited them in his bag. Miss Dexter came in to say that the doctor had come again. He had ridden across the park, or Lord Dormoral, whose ears were alert for the coming of Jezebel — even though, as he knew, some two hours must pass before the carriage even started to meet her — must have heard his approach.

Mr. Waddifer took farewell of him.

"I shall hope for a better account of you," he said, pressing his client's hand.

"The next account will be of the closing of my eyes," said Lord Dormoral. "I have to thank you, Waddifer, for your services to me now and always. I was going to say I should never forget them, but I have n't much time to remember things in. I think you know I am grateful to you. One thing; you will see my wife — Mrs. Riversley, I should say — yourself. You will see her and give her my letter yourself. Tell that boy, too, that I don't blame him. Boy — Lord, I suppose he 's forty by now! I liked the young rascal. Yes, Waddifer, I overreached myself once. Tell 'em both that I owned it. Well, I must n't keep you. You 've your train. They 'll give you some dinner. Good-bye, old friend. It 's the long Good-bye."

Mr. Waddifer's eyes were clouded.

"Good-bye," he said, "good-bye. But I trust you are mistaken."

Lord Dormoral shook his head.

"After all," he said, "sooner or later it 's the way of all flesh. The Good Book tells us that."

"And much beside," said the lawyer.

"We 'll not mind what 's beside," said Lord Dormoral with a last handshake; and Mr. Waddifer took his departure.

After the doctor's visit, restlessness seized Jezebel's father, and a nervousness, that was painful to watch, began to possess him. He started up at a sound. His fingers played ceaselessly upon the counterpane. Miss Dexter, with a strangely softened expression, sat beside him, and rose more than once at his bidding to go to the window and look out across the park. She knew when her niece might be expected and when not, but it seemed a small thing to humour the reasonable become unreasonable. There was no professional nurse ("I 'll have no strange women about me"). Time enough to rest when all was done!

She sat between whiles in an unoccupied way with her hands in her lap. She could hardly have told how her thoughts were employed. They fled this way and that, much as Jezebel's, and she fell into reverie if her brother for a few minutes let her be. The movement of the pale fingers on the coverlet disquieted her. There was a word at the back of her mind. She would not let it come forward for fear that it should be made articulate. The sick man spoke it for her when almost involuntarily she put her hand over his.

"Yes, I know," he said. "I am plucking the quilt. I don 't feel able to help it."

"It is time for your medicine," said Miss Dexter abruptly.

But it was not, by five minutes, and she waited for them to elapse before measuring the drops and giving the glass to him. He emptied it with an effort and lay back.

"There won't be much twilight," he said.

"The days are very long. There 's an hour or more of daylight."

"And then the night. There won't be much twilight."

She thought his mind wandering.

"There were days in the tropics like that. Daylight. Darkness. No twilight. Lionel Baskerville and I had good times when we travelled together. Teddy 's not the man his father was, but he 'll serve, he 'll serve. I wish Jessy would come. I wish Jessy . . . "

Miss Dexter smoothed his pillow.

"She 'll not be very long now," she said shortly, in the tone she meant to be gentle, and went to the window.

The park shone in the afterglow of sunset. Homing rooks sailed high in the blue that was now tinged with yellow to green. Birds were twittering in the silence. The note of a robin separated itself from the rest, and was sweet in the gracious summer evening — sweet to keep you on earth, or stay, if you must die, your dying awhile. It was the peace and the joy of the beautiful world made articulate.

Presently Lord Dormoral called her, and she went to his side.

"I 've often wondered," he said, "whether you cared for Egbert Malmsey. I know all that happened, of course, and all that was said. It would interest me, now that I 'm dying, to know whether you cared for him."

Miss Dexter stood silent for some moments.

"It was all in the dark ages," she said then — "so long ago that I 've almost forgotten. Yes, thank God, I have forgotten."

"You did then ? "

"I suppose so. Before I despised him."

There was a pause.

"And afterwards too," she added.

Lord Dormoral said nothing for a little while, yet did

not seem to have dismissed the subject. Miss Dexter was twisting a ring upon one of her fingers.

"One has to love some one," he said at length. "I loved no one, and love Jessy. You cared for Egbert Malmsey — a fine fellow he was, too, in those days! — and you hated the Fitz-Rockingham. The boy has the looks of his father."

"There 's Fitz-Rockingham blood in him for all that."

"If," said Lord Dormoral slowly — "if ever it should happen that he and Jessy . . . you understand . . . you 'd overlook the Fitz-Rockingham taint?"

"For the humbling of the Malmsey woman I 'd overlook anything. I've had the same thought. Years ago it struck me. I remember the day. She and I 'd had a passage-at-arms in the bank at Uncton — or was it Jessy and she? — and the handsome boy was with her. That would bring the woman to her knees I thought, and that 's how I should like to see her before I die. I 'm with you there, Edward."

"It is well," said Lord Dormoral, and lay still for a while. Then began again the restless plucking at the quilt.

Miss Dexter fell into a deeper reverie than before. Old memories stirred within her. Egbert Malmsey . . . a fine fellow in those days! They were brave days. He had eyes like the sky and the sea, and a leg to judge legs by. He had a ringing voice with a sound of metal in it, and like Esau he smelled cleanly of the field. She could see him in pink. . . . Those were days. She had looks then. She remembered the tale of her looking-glass — not that she troubled it often. She was brown even then, and raven as a gipsy or Jezebel herself. She, too, had eyes. They had held Egbert Malmsey in leash for times and a time. . . . He could whisper and plead. He had hands that could thrill you. . . . And then there were the long absences — years and years — and finally there was the Fitz-Rockingham. It was all of it ages ago and forgotten.

Daylight left the sky, and a lamp was lighted; but Lord Dormoral refused to have the curtains drawn. He quieted again, and lay between sleeping and waking. So passed the hours. He had been still for a time — Miss Dexter supposed him asleep — when of a sudden he raised himself.

"Listen," he said, "listen."

Miss Dexter heard nothing. A mouse gnawed the wainscot, that was all.

"By the lodge," he said, "where the road turns. . . . You'll hear in a moment. Can't you hear now? Can't you? Where are your ears that mine should be keener, when they might well be expected to fail! There . . . there. . . . The deaf might hear."

"Yes, I hear," said Miss Dexter. "You're quite right, that's the carriage. I could only hear mice in the wall, but I hear."

"Now grant me patience," said Lord Dormoral, and lay back with closed eyes, waiting.

It seemed a long time before the wheels ground the gravel under the windows, but after that it was only a few seconds before Jezebel was clasped in the arms of her father.

"My heart's treasure," he said, and repeated the words again and again.

Jezebel cried like a baby, but presently recovering herself she brushed her tears away. Her father devoured her with his eyes as she sat on the edge of the bed in her travelling dress and looked an embodiment of youth and health and vigour. He wanted to hear of her journey and of Paris (in telling this thing and that of and against herself she made him smile as of old); and what had she done to her hand? Jezebel told of the accident that had given her the handkerchief of a stranger. It was still round her hand, which was painful.

"I wonder who he was," she said, as if idly, and talked

bravely on till her father insisted that she should go and have the supper that was waiting for her.

Miss Dexter, having summoned Buckram to sit with his master, followed her from the room.

Jezebel seized her two hands.

"It was best to be definite," said Miss Dexter. "Nothing can be done. It is a question of days — perhaps of hours. Your father knew at once, and Peyton and Jeller said the same thing. Filton was here an hour or so ago, and comes back about eleven. Lord God, Jezebel, it 's like losing part of one's self. You 're young. . . . You 've all your limbs yet. . . . I've seen mine struck off one by one. . . . He can't be to you what he is to me. We 've stood together and laughed at the stupid world. . . ." She broke off with a harsh sound that made Jezebel's hands tighten on hers. It was the sob of one not used to crying.

"I know," Jezebel said, "I know."

Miss Dexter pulled herself together, and walked in front of her niece to the dining-room. She was dry-eyed when she sat down to the table, and the two conversed for a while on indifferent subjects. But not many minutes elapsed before they were back in the spirit at the bedside of Lord Dormoral, nor many more before the hurried meal was over, and Jezebel rose to her feet. She was still dusty from travel, and had eaten with unwashed hands.

Miss Dexter was giving the sick man some nourishment when, after a hasty toilet, Jezebel returned to his room.

"I 'll leave you," she said shortly, and put down the cup. "If you want me I shall be in my room."

"Poor old Betty," Lord Dormoral said, when the door closed behind her; "poor old Betty."

"She 's breaking her heart for you," Jezebel said. "We all are. Oh, father!"

She hid her face on his neck. He held her clasped to him for a time.

"We won't cry," said Lord Dormoral presently; "tears

are for fools. We know better, you and I. When our time comes we go. Nothing alters that. We've to face it. I've had a fair spell here. I've passed the allotted span, and though I'm not far from fourscore I can't complain that I've had labour and sorrow. On the whole I've found the world a good place enough."

Jezebel said nothing, and Lord Dormoral fell into silence. He seemed, however, to have something to say, and Jezebel was careful not to disturb his thoughts.

"About your mother," he said at last; and Jezebel said, "Yes, father?"

"She was a deeply wronged woman," he said, after another pause. "Always know that. You came into this world without any stain on your birth, and I did you the deadly wrong that I did her. The step she took afterwards, I may be said to have driven her to. We make the bulk of our troubles, that's the sum of my experience. But she was a bit of a fool, all the same, and on that score I don't blame myself more than need be. The thing was a jest of sorts that missed fire — nay, rather, that exploded and maimed, with us all, what I came to love most upon earth. I hurt you, dearest, — you. I would have given my heart's blood to undo what I did, and I ought to ask you from my soul to forgive me."

"Nonsense, father," Jezebel said, under her breath, and pressed his hand quickly.

"But it was a grievous thing to do," said Lord Dormoral fretfully — "grievous, grievous. I was cruel to your mother. I would be sorrier on her account if I did not remember so well how her timidness irritated me. I can't explain. I took pleasure in frightening her. I have seen her tremble when I came near her. She used to cry, too. Poor little Pussy. She thought me a Nero. And there was your Aunt Dexter to help me. Between us we made the child's life a burden. She was a dove in an eagle's nest. You might well hate me for her sake."

"She did n't understand you," said Jezebel.

"I did n't help her to understand me. Yet, if the time were over again, all the same things would happen, I know, — except my distrust of her, and that, I think now, was half-hearted. I could have liked her better if she had been capable of deceiving me. She was not. There 's where I was a fool. Well, it 's over, and what 's done 's done. I have written to her, and in my will I have made substantial mention of her, but nothing can wipe out an injustice. I want you to know, that 's all."

"Poor mother," Jezebel said; "but poor only not to have understood you! I can hardly understand not understanding you or Aunt Dexter either. As to my name, it 's as good as another and fits me. I, at least, would not change it."

And that in substance was what was said at Lord Dormoral's death-bed, and from it, about the tragedy of the day in February that opened this story.

Thenceforward his talk was mostly of Jezebel's future, coupled, like a toast, with the name of Mrs. Baskerville.

## CHAPTER III

Lord Dormoral lived three days and then died, falling on the second into a state of unconsciousness, from which he recovered but for a few minutes at the end. Jezebel and Miss Dexter were constantly with him, and if so free-thinking a death-bed cannot unreservedly be called happy, at least it was marked by a notable peace.

Then for a time did the days seem out of gear, and Hinton Dormoral to belong to strangers. Miss Dexter shut herself up in her rooms. There was a coming and going of feet, and, till the funeral was over, and only Mr. Waddifer and the trustees remained, Jezebel's nerves were on edge, and she, too, like her aunt, could have hidden herself. She had not, however, Miss Dexter's known oddity for shelter, and she did all that was required of her in that house of drawn blinds. The old peer in his life had been shunned by his kind, but the country-side turned out for his obsequies. Jezebel received protestations of sympathy, and listened with well-concealed impatience to all the trite things that people find to say at such times. She was civil to the intention, and curbed an irritation such as Lord Dormoral himself would have experienced. She wanted to be alone that she might think of her father without molestation. A confused impression of bustle and mourning, and of much that was ridiculous, remained to her of the day of the funeral itself. Others cried in the church — even people who did n't care tuppence — and she with dry eyes wondered why Mr. Hamer-Acland's hair (at his age) showed a cow's-lick, and what Mr. Waddifer's wife was, or indeed could be like, to have married anything so orderly as that model person. She saw Bethesda with streaming cheeks on the outskirts of the crowd; saw

that she had brought both the twins, and that their white pelisses were adorned with crape rosettes. Mr. Barnstaple's kind voice quavered through the service. There was sunlight; and dusty sunbeams illumined jet, and silk of wide rib, and black feathers and flowers, and mourning bands on hats, held closely, . . . and how her father would have hated it all! He would have grunted and groaned in his pew at a convention that demanded such trappings. Miss Dexter, shut up in her room and called "odd" for her pains, was the wise one after all. Now the bell was tolling again. . . . But the horrible day had an end, and at length Jezebel had leisure for sorrow — but numberless letters to write. They must wait.

She went out from the first in the cart her father had given her, and there were not wanting those who, seeing her in Uncton or Ettram, shook their heads, and thought that it would have become her better to keep to the grounds and the park for her exercise. Her looks were commented upon, too. Mrs. Prendergast would have liked to see a little more pallor.

Lady Margaret took her part upon that with: —

"Well, after all, you can't blame the girl for bein' so monstrous good-lookin'. I don't myself care to see people sallow, even if they are sufferin' bereavement."

Mrs. Prendergast ignored the thrust, and said: —

"Do you think her good-looking?"

Lady Margaret said tartly that surely there could n't be two opinions as to that.

"Well, perhaps she is," said Mrs. Prendergast, with an air of generosity. "A little too remarkable, perhaps, for my taste, but, I suppose, good-looking in a way. Poor girl, it is all very sad!" and took comfort in the thought that if there was not Lady Margaret there was always Lady Malmsey. There were others, too, and Mrs. Prendergast had more than once the satisfaction of saying, "That was just what I said. To see her one would hardly suppose . . . "

And so the world wagged.

Miss Dexter emerged after a time and looked wan and old. She was less erect than before, and her hair was noticeably greyer. She was like one without a purpose in life. She wandered about the house forlornly, looking into rooms that she did not enter, and pausing for minutes together at some passage window to gaze out with eyes that Jezebel saw did not see. She spent a strange day rummaging in one of the tower rooms, and unearthed a damaged oil-painting, which she said was an early portrait of her brother. But so stained and torn was the canvas that the likeness was difficult to trace. She mended the picture herself with a clumsy needle, and cleaned it with crumbs, rejecting Jezebel's suggestion that it should be sent to London to be "restored," and when all was done set it up like a shrine in her bedroom. Her passion for walking deserted her. She strode out as if for a long expedition, and would come back in ten minutes. She was silent and irritable.

Mr. Waddifer incurred her displeasure. It was necessary that he should be at the Castle a good deal just then, and she resented his presence — in his presence and audibly.

Mr. Waddifer said, "Madam, the work 's to be done and I 'm here to do it."

Miss Dexter said, "Sir, make an end of it."

Jezebel had to interpose. She laughed out. It was all very funny. She pacified the indignant solicitor afterwards.

Mr. Baskerville had come and was gone. Jezebel liked him. Her father had left him in a manner her guardian, and Mrs. Baskerville in good time was, as she had supposed, to present her to her Sovereign, and, by a happily devised arrangement which had been mooted a year or two since, to give her a home in London if and when she should need it, and the advantage of her chaperoning wing.

"In the meantime," Mr. Baskerville said at the station, whither she had accompanied him to see him off, and holding her hand — "in the meantime you must come to us at the Abbey as soon as ever you feel up to it. Dolly will be only too glad to see you. Drop her a line at any time. Good-bye, my dear, and Gob-blessu."

But Jezebel had no thought of going to stay with people for many a long day, and when the first press of the business connected with the settling-up of her father's affairs was over, she would gladly have remained at Hinton Dormoral, if the state of her aunt's nerves had not made some change seem imperative. Then had Jezebel what is called the work of the world. Miss Dexter was impracticable "to break everything," and obstinate to the limits of your patience. She would not, and there was an end of it. Nor did she care if she did become ill. Her life was her own to keep or lose as she wished.

That might be, Jezebel ceded, but think of the inconvenience of illness! Miss Dexter said darkly that that was an inconvenience which might be curtailed. Jezebel's task seemed hopeless. Miss Dexter was strong, but Jezebel stronger, and in the end she prevailed and bore away the odd lady in triumph to the Black Forest, where little by little she accustomed herself to the new conditions.

At this point Jezebel's life seemed to halt for a season. The mischief in her slumbered, and she looked back with something of wonder to the time of her pranks and wild spirits. Not now could she have crept in the garb of a boy (Pierrot to Pierrette of her partner in folly) through a sleeping house to the scene of her exuberant indiscretion. Not now would the chaste face of the dozing Piplin have offered a moment's temptation, or the hearts of student Paris have seemed worth the drooping or lifting of an eyelid to snare. She fancied herself in a state of transition. She spent long days in the open air with books beside her which she did not read, and, living in the past, wondered

what life held for her. Miss Dexter went her eccentric way, and the two met or did not meet at meals, and talked or were silent, yet understood each other and lived peaceably. Jezebel was as one waiting. This was a lull in her affairs, and she knew it vaguely. Presently something would happen. She knew not from what quarter the cloud would appear that, small it might be as the hand of a man, must spread to be a covering heaven and bring heaven to earth in reviving rain ; but she was alert in a manner and . . . presently something would happen. She treasured some of her memories and a few square inches of cambric. There were moments when she hung over an embroidered initial, wondering. The work was exquisitely fine. The letter R was traced in delicate stitches, which might well be the labour of loving fingers, and she could believe that the love of some woman had been sewn in with the thread. She was impatient at times to know that the thing interested her, and she frowned at a tiny mark on the back of her hand and at the recollection of some words that remained to her. "I shall always remember," they ran to the beat of a pulse, "that at the outset I did you harm" ; and seemed to have deeper significance than that which they bore on the face of them. That one day she would meet the speaker again, she felt sure. His words implied some such expectation upon his part as well. But they held more, and, if the thing had been possible, she could have believed them to reach back in some way into a time anterior to that at which they were spoken. Meanwhile she had to dismiss a thought or two that disturbed her.

So passed two months. Jezebel sounded her aunt. She, too, was ready for England, and Weston had been homesick for weeks.

"I don't complain," the matronly maid said ; "Miss Jessy, dear, you won't think that. It 's the outlandish ways and the not having no one to speak to. I declare Bethesda, dear little silly as she was, 'd been better than nothing.

I can't stomach foreigners nohow. Give me people that talk like Christians. But I 'm not complaining, Miss Jessy, and must we stop out here much longer ? "

It was October when the three turned their faces towards home. The summer had been royal, and the autumn was gracious. There was still no occasion for haste. Weston, with the knowledge that England lay somewhere ahead of her, and not at her back, could be patient. Moreover, she met other maids and was no longer thrown upon aliens for society. She turned scathing looks upon a young valet who ventured to see a hone for his wit in the elder Miss Dexter's appearance. He was travelling himself with over-dressed rich, and she found means of conveying to him what was what and what not, and how little, under the circumstances, his levity became him. She was recognized as the proud and humble servitor of great people.

Our travellers in time reached Boulogne, choosing their route almost at random. Jezebel had a wish to see the place where the childhood of the quondam Miss Moulton had been spent. She had conjured up a hundred times in imagination the *Petits Arbres*, where Moulty (a figure of fun, even then, to a certainty !) had taken the air with her nurse, and trundled a hoop, or waded through a sea of dead leaves, or looked for the chrysalis that slept in the bark of the trees. She believed that she would hail as old friends the ramparts, upon the wide outer walls of which Moulty had walked for a dizzy treat when her attendant was in good temper enough to grant her leave and a steadying hand. There were stone seats that Moulty's pupil could claim as acquaintances, and glimpses of the old town that would stir memories by proxy, and long flights of steps (with shining and brown iron railings) that led down to mysterious solitudes. There were mounds where daisies grew in the grass, and where Moulty's first interest in botany had been aroused. She used to root up the daisy plants carefully and take them home to grow

them in pots. Moulty had something to say about flower-pots also. They were associated with the market-place, down by the Church of St. Nicolas, where you could buy earthenware money-boxes, too, that you broke when you had filled them with sous. "But they never *were* filled," Moulty used to say, smiling. The market held flowers in profusion. Jezebel had almost been able to smell them as the governess talked. She could see the yellow butter, too, and the cool leaves and the damp napkins that held it. The very gutters in the streets, down which soapy water would career with such entrancing haste, the sinks, and the "fountains" that splashed so, would all have a meaning for her, and she wanted to see them. Miss Moulton had always been able to calm an obstreperous pupil with tales of Boulogne.

Nor did Jezebel the sentimental, a different person still from Jezebel the outrageous, suffer disillusion. The place was to her all she had wished, and much that she had expected to find it. She wrote to Mrs. Grayling, who was the married Miss Moulton, to tell her.

"I feel as if I too at some time had lived here," she wrote, "and that I am remembering things I used to know well. I think now that you must have been a wonderful woman to give me such vivid impressions. I found the ring on the Port where you tripped and sprained your ankle, and the sand-hills of Capécure where the spiky grass grew. The handles of the street fountains shine just as you said they did, and I found myself wishing I was a child again that I might have the joy of disobeying somebody and getting my feet wet. I suppose the keenness of my interest in these things shows (beside my affection for you) how dull I am getting, for the wish was a very small thing, and I don't in truth want to riot or make anybody's life a burden. I am not Jezebel at all. I am Ruth or Mrs. Trimmer or anybody else that is exemplary. However . . ."

She broke off without finishing, and subscribed herself her friend's most affectionate Jezebel Dexter, but added on an impulse a postscript.

"Moulty, I am a bit lonely. I want what I have always wanted, and that is some one to play with. I think I want to begin to play, too. I wish sometimes that the time had come for me to go to 'the Baskerville.' Yet perhaps I shall hate her. Meanwhile something about this place—" She left that unfinished, too.

It was the light hearts in the streets. It was looks that were turned on her. It was youth and sentiment. In the Black Forest her life had been stagnant. Here it wanted to ripple and flow, as the lives that were rippling and flowing about her. Not for a moment was her father forgotten. His loss was an ever-present sorrow to her, but she was finding that after all she herself was still living, and that the living have claims more urgent than those of the dead. Nor in this did she ignore what her father himself would have wished. His whole life had been a protest against convention. She determined to hunt in the winter.

There broke in this wonderful autumn a day that was a veritable throw back to June. Sunlight streamed in at Jezebel's window and she knew that it danced on the sea. She had passed at a step, as it were, from sleep to wide waking and could not lie longer abed. She rang for her bath and her coffee, and before the morning was much older no roof covered her but a sky that was exceedingly blue and that coloured the sea generously. Jezebel made for the pier. She wanted to sit in the sun and breathe deeply. Some papers were under her arm, but she did not expect to read much. She was ready to bask in the consciousness of living and feel one with the universe. She sat at the end of the pier and looked towards England. . . .

But presently it became very dull to feel one with the

universe by yourself. The very fairness of the day disturbed her. The only way to feel one with the sea and the sky and the beautiful round world was to be one of two, and she was Jezebel as she had been Jezebel always.

She turned with a sigh that was restive from the smiling thing that hurt her, and saw some one she knew. It was Anthony Mundham.

## CHAPTER IV

SEVEN years fell from her. She was a little girl who had found two friends. She remembered the hot-pot and Didgy's long spoon. That had been a day that was golden.

Anthony Mundham was holding her hand and was saying, "Miss Dexter!" and that he would have known her anywhere; and fugitive thoughts of her father, Lady Malmsey, the oak, a pony (Slug, it was Slug!), the sound of skates on ice, the look of a sheet of paper with borders of nearly an inch, and the pattern of a certain frock, were flitting across Jezebel's brain as shadows of clouds on the side of a hill.

She said: "It's all ages ago. Are you here in Boulogne?" and laughed at the folly of her question.

"For a day or two. I have relations here. And you?"

"We are on our way home."

She saw him glance at her black dress.

Nine o'clock struck somewhere up in the piled town.

"The sun woke me," she said.

"And me."

"I had to come out."

"I have been bathing" — she saw that his brown hair was ruffled under his cap and that his face glowed — "from the shore, of course" (he waved his hand in the direction of the sands); "the season is over. The water was as warm as possible."

Jezebel looked at the sea.

"It calls one," she said.

He looked at her. He, too, dropped seven years. He saw the child through the budding woman and felt a schoolboy once more as he said: —

"You are not a bit changed."

Then they walked to the seat where Jezebel had been sitting, and whence she had risen when they met. But they talked of Boulogne for five minutes, and of different and indifferent matters, and seemed drifting apart on the dead sea of convention when Jezebel said:—

"And you never came back, did you?"

Anthony Mundham flushed suddenly, for all the bravery of his years of discretion.

"You don't know what I felt about that," he said, as if he spoke of a thing that had happened the day before, "—what we both felt. It was one of those things . . ."

Jezebel was looking at him in questioning surprise. She saw what he was thinking and hastened to speak:—

"I meant to that part of the world," she said, "to Warbeck."

"Oh, yes," he said. "I 've stayed there twice since. I was there just before I went up to the 'varsity, and again the next year."

"After all," said Jezebel, half to herself, "you might have been at Warbeck a dozen times without my knowing it. I don't know why I said that."

"I 'm glad you said it, because it gives me an opportunity of speaking of something else. It 's all so long ago you may have forgotten. *I* have n't. Do you know what I mean? Can you recollect anything so far back?"

"We were children," said Jezebel. "Does anything that happened then matter now?"

"If anything ever matters," said Anthony.

"I will try to remember," said Jezebel.

There was creaking in the air, with hoarse shoutings, and a fishing-smack putting out to sea neared the bar. From the Capécure pier came the clap-clapping of wooden shoes on the boards as the women who wished her God-speed walked along by her side.

The name of the boat was Our Lady of Tears.

"Oh, the sea," Jezebel said, "the sea!" and did not explain.

She turned back to her companion.

"I remember perfectly well. We were children. It mattered more for that. I was a little girl — rather a lonely little girl (for reasons that I didn't understand and do now, and don't regret or even regard seriously), but lonely — and I had made two friends. They left me without a word. One of them I haven't seen since till to-day, the other one — "

"There were excuses for the other one."

"Oh, excuses!" said Jezebel. "A foolish little girl, — she was a passionate little person, — with her head full of old wives' tales, writes a ridiculous letter on paper with borders a foot wide, and he turns his back on her forever."

She spoke with a laugh in her eyes.

"It came at a grave moment," he said. "It even took effect."

"The girl was a witch," said Jezebel. "She dealt in black magic; she blasted trees and struck people down with sickness. Oh, look at the sun on those sails, and the green there is under the keel of that boat. The day is too fair for disagreement."

Anthony Mundham touched her hand lightly with his.

"I don't disagree with you. That's what I have waited — six years, is it? — seven? — to tell you. Will you believe that I have looked to our meeting? We couldn't help what happened. Will you hear me?"

Jezebel bowed her imperial head. A straw hat became it prodigiously. He thought her black serge dress the prettiest he had ever seen. A woman would have realized the cunning art of its make and the subtlety of its seeming simplicity.

Jezebel was never ill-appointed.

"You sat half a night talking?" she said, when he had

done. "You did care what I should think? You did? And *he* did? Swear to me he did! You don't know how much it mattered. I waited all day. I was n't even angry then. That was afterwards when I was able to hate you both, and to think about the black-edged letter for her."

"We were sent out shooting," said Anthony. "We spent a wretched day."

He had forgotten how the sport and Hugo Fitz-Rockingham (to say nothing of the luncheon) had consoled them.

The sun was higher now.

"Oh," said Jezebel, "let us walk. What a day! It is like spring. Look — the cliffs. There; right away, where I 'm pointing. England! They say that means rain."

He followed her finger. She had risen, and, resting one knee on the seat as she stood, she looked with clear eyes at a low white line on the horizon.

He found it.

"So we shall pay for our day," she said, and turned her eyes upon him to bewilderment.

"Then let us enjoy it," he said. "Let us walk as you said. Where? — Portel? Pont de Briques? The Colonne?"

"Anywhere," said Jezebel. "The sands — towards the fort over there. And then, if you think we are quite proper people for you to know, will you come back and breakfast with us?"

He was susceptible, as we remember, and more than half in love with her then. He was — they were both — in the heyday of youth, when things are done quickly or never. When they came back from their walk, his heart was in her hands to do as she would with; hers was in its own place, pleasantly fluttered, it might be, but wholly possessed; for each of which reasons Jezebel was the happier. She saw the signs of her conquest, and recognized them. She would not have been human, nor a woman, if the sense of her power had not elated her.

Miss Dexter at breakfast was grimly gracious. To Jezebel's "Mr. Mundham knows Lady Malmsey" (given, as it was, with Jezebel's twinkle at the introduction), she said, "We must overlook that."

"Then all 's well," said her niece, and laughed in the eyes of their guest. "My aunt may be said to accept you."

The omelet was golden on their plates, the wine red in their glasses. Sunlight streamed in at the window, and the cloth was so white that you scarcely could look at it. Waiters sped this way and that, taking their orders from Jezebel of the fluent tongue and the French R. Miss Dexter's French, which was quaint and incisive, was kept for admonishment only, and they trembled, if they smiled in their sleeves, when she turned it like a Maxim or other quick-shooter upon them. She asked for less noise ("broo-ee") when some silver was clattered and had them aquake as in the days of the sufferings of poor Jezebel's mother. Lady Dormoral, that was, had always looked pained and embarrassed and shamed; her daughter, with a robuster temperament, extracted from precisely like scenes keen amusement.

Anthony Mundham's heart warmed to every one. Jezebel dominated the hour and more than the hour for him. She shed her radiance over all that was connected with her directly or indirectly. Thus, Miss Dexter, rugged as she was and rough-cut, — if, indeed, she was cut at all, — sparkled in the benign light of her niece's propinquity. The nimble waiters were not ordinary waiters. They were spirits attendant, called into existence by her presence. And the omelet, delicious as it was, was of gold, and the wine a red wine for the gods.

But Jezebel's vision was not less clear than usual. Anthony Mundham was a good-looking boy, fresh and healthy, who would give to her impressions the point and the meaning they wanted. That was all.

He was with her again the next morning. They met at the same spot and hour. There was still not a cloud in the sky, and for that, or perversity, Jezebel prophesied rain.

He said it would not be yet. Nor was it.

Jezebel was elusive as some young wild beautiful thing of the woods. She was like a squirrel or a bird — once a snake. He was in the mood for comparing, and, seeing Jezebel incomparable, must needs find a likeness for her everywhere. She was the sea, and the sky, and the air he was breathing. She was also the morning. He held inward colloquy with her if silence ever fell between them, when he made her to answer such words as he chose. In the flesh she was wayward, provoking (the word asks for French, I see, now that it is written), enchaining, and always elusive. Why could not he hold her?

She, upon her part, looked at his eager eyes and skin (this was ruddy and clear and English-clean), and asked herself the same question. He could not hold her. He would never hold her. She belonged to herself — most of all to herself when she saw how fully he belonged to her. Then came a flying thought of an initial on cambric, and of other eyes that had looked into hers, and he saw the thought in reflection in her face, and wondered what the thought was that had moved her. She met his wonder tranquilly.

Yet his presence made her happy. The clamour of the Fish Market (they went in at the call of it) took point and charm from his nearness. She looked at monstrous conger eels, giant plaice, soles paired like gloves, mackerel, cod; and was interested. A dog-fish reminded her of Mrs. Prendergast, and she laughed out and showed her beautiful teeth, and held her companion more heavily chained.

"I shall never be free any more," he told himself, with indrawn and fervent "Oh, Jezebels!" — though he knew in his heart, by experience, that he told himself nonsense!

And when they had spent twenty minutes with fishes, she longed for the sight and the scent of flowers, and together, by streets, the names of which changed with political crises, they wended their way to the market-place.

She touched his arm, stopping suddenly.

"Listen!"

Her face was aglow.

It was the sound of potatoes being poured into a wooden measure. Moulty had described this indescribable sound to her, and here it was. Yes, it was indescribable. The *pong-pong* of the first to fall in! Did he hear? It gave her "memories." Moulty was wonderful — must have been wonderful.

Mundham was astray.

"Well, no matter," said Jezebel. . . . "And one other thing. I want to see the tops screwed off turnips. She is going to do it. Look! Listen! Would n't you like to do that? How crisply they give. It is like something . . . like what? . . . the grazing of a cow on the other side of a hedge . . . an apple bitten clean by a horse. (No. I know you don't know what I 'm talking about. But I 'm not mad, and I am very happy.) Are those things potatoes or Jerusalem artichokes? Is n't *Topinambour* the funniest word you ever heard?"

There was Jezebel Incomprehensible, and Jezebel Chatterbox.

The man and the maid spent a memorable hour. There was lunch after that at the hotel as before, and, going to the covered courtyard, where the little green tables were and coffee was served, they met Weston.

It wanted but that to clinch matters, and show Mundham how deeply in love he was.

"You don't remember me," he said, "but I remember you. It 's the Lady with the Long Spoon."

The words stirred memories as the spoon itself had stirred up the savoury contents of the hot-pot.

Weston, bridling, said, "Lord, sir, and fancy your thinking of that!"

They talked for some moments, Weston flattered at his recollection and notice of her, and Mundham feeding his thoughts of Jezebel on the thoughts which the sight of her attendant evoked.

"It seems like yesterday," he said.

"It seems like seven years ago," said Jezebel.

"Yet it all seems natural," said Weston.

"You had another name," said Anthony, groping in the back of his mind. "You were — what were you? I have it. You were Didgy."

"It's wonderful, sir," said Weston, with eyes to the ceiling and down again. "But your friend, sir, his young lordship? Is his memory like yours? Does he too remember the 'ot-pot?"

He had reason to remember it, if nothing else, Anthony thought to himself. Aloud he said, "To be sure he remembers."

Jezebel had walked over to where Miss Dexter sat drinking her coffee.

"I've not much opinion of him for all that," said Weston, "and asking your pardon for speaking so free. Look at my young lady, sir, and judge what I think of them as think small things of her. I've little opinion of Malmseys."

"I must n't listen to you," said Anthony, but he put out his hand to shake hers, "I must n't listen to you, but it is good to have seen you again."

That night Anthony Mundham wrote to Philip. Ostensibly he was writing an answer to certain questions connected with a commercial undertaking in which Malmsey was interested; but Anthony was Mr. Dick, Jezebel the head of King Charles. A wonderful thing had happened; thus he began. He went on to describe the meeting, and the beauty of Jezebel. "We talked of you," he said some-

where; "it is seven years: she had not forgotten." He remembered the object of his letter from time to time, but always came back to Jezebel. He mentioned Weston, recalling, of course, the Long Spoon. He then said how badly they both had behaved. He did not ignore how little the fault had been theirs, but he laid stress on the dubious appearance their conduct must surely have borne, and, being deeply in love, he so spoke of Jezebel as to set Philip's thoughts, when the letter reached him, running back to her.

"I suppose," said that young man to himself in the gun-room at Warbeck, "I suppose that we did behave execrably."

## CHAPTER V

PHILIP MALMSEY was now of age and as fine a young animal as you would see in a day in a land of fine animals. He was more than an animal, however, and his sports, if they contributed to his enjoyment of the life that he lived, did not fill it.

He loved his books; read, having done with forced labours; was something of a poet; had a fine ear for music; a love, indeed, of the arts generally; a gentleman's taste in wine; and that property which we recognize without understanding and speak of as personal magnetism.

As yet he had more attraction for the sex we call fair than the sex we call fair had for him. He had an eye to win any woman's fancy — an eye that was blue as the heavens and none the less engaging for being steady rather than roving. The roving eye may have its allurements: Philip's calm outlook (was the prig in it still?) had wrought havoc of sorts with stray hearts, and would do so again. It could twinkle, none the less. Do not suppose it too grave nor too staid. It was often as mischievous as the most mischievous could wish it mischievous, but it could be aloof as the steely blue eye of his mother.

At Warbeck still reigned Lady Malmsey, and would reign, it was probable, till the marriage of Philip should send her to the Dower House at Queen's Exeter beyond Uncton and the Ford. Her nose was not less in the air than formerly, nor her fancy for the Fitz-Rockingham species less notable. Yearly, the Fitz-Rockingham Week brought together as many Fitz-Rockinghams as possible: Theresa, mother of all, the Bishop, Lady Ann, Marmaduke (Philip's uncle and the father of Gundred and Hilary, who were married, but, as Fitz-Rockinghams born, came

none the less when their husbands could spare them, or could be induced to accompany them), Miranda (the lovely and dull Lady Burcheston), Hugo, the unmatched and unmated, and others, or others who sprang from the stock.

Philip sometimes said, "Mother, our family . . . !" but never much more, and suffered her.

Lady Malmsey said, "Our duty as head of it . . . " Which they were not. But the rightful head, Lord Fitz-Rockingham, had an invalid wife and did nothing, and "Theresa," the dowager, had long since withdrawn from active life, and lived, when she was at home, in dignified retirement at Cheltenham, where her bath-chair and the bugles on her patrician bonnet were objects of local interest, and gave to the place an air of distinction that was not better appreciated by any one than by the great lady herself.

Philip, then, who allowed his mother her head and headship, was a model son. He was a model peer. He was The Young Peer, and might have sat for some such picture. You could see him framed and glazed (Hugo said this) in "many a cottage home." Hugo further said that for his part he liked the rustle of a wild oat or two, and Philip, as far as his cousin could see or could hear, had sowed none. Even at Oxford his life had been blameless — a pity, said Hugo. But Hugo was of the world and said more than his prayers.

Still there were people who agreed with Hugo: Mrs. Baskerville, who had conceived a tenderness for Philip one year at Lord's, when he had been brought by a friend to her carriage for luncheon; Lady Jute, who admitted to finding his looks disquieting; Lady Balltry, and others. Mrs. Baskerville, to be sure, had not seen much of him since, but had told Hugo at the time that she had met some one wholly exemplary. And how odd that was! She ventured to prophesy.

Hugo said, "We must keep the boy out of your way, Mrs. Bask — or else send him to you for reform."

"Send him to me," said Mrs. Baskerville's laughter.

Lady Jute, who would not know Mrs. Baskerville, said to Hugo that his cousin was almost *too* good.

Lady Balltry said, "Oh, we must give the boy time."

And, Hugo suggested, the Woman.

Lady Balltry said, "Hugo, how can you!"

But it seemed to be agreed that Lord Malmsey with the adorable face *was* rather model.

"I would n't mind," Lady Jute said — "I would n't mind his not being in love with me if there was any one else, but we all know there is n't."

"His mother fills Warbeck with frumps," said Lady Balltry.

This was more or less true. When the Fitz-Rockinghams were not there, and that was seldom enough, there was the same austere set which Lady Malmsey affected — people, as Hugo said, who subscribed to the London Library and the Thirty-nine Articles. Warbeck was just as monumental as it could be. In profane circles it was known as the Edifice. Archbishops stayed there.

There had been rejoicings and fêtes, and all the usual functions when Philip came of age. There had been a great dinner to the tenants in a vast tent in the park, and Philip's speech (it was to the point, "literary," and witty) had been given at length in the local papers and mentioned briefly in the London. He had always promised to speak well. Hugo that week had been proud of him, calling him Lothair, and conceding that he bore his honours gracefully.

Philip was a Great Gentleman. Others were just gentlemen. Still it was on the occasion of the tenants' dinner, and while Philip was speaking, that Hugo whispered to Lady Margaret: —

"A picture — is it? A young peer — no, The Young Peer. I have it. *The Young Peer*, do you take me?"

"He speaks amazin'ly well," said Lady Margaret.

"That 's it," said Hugo. "That 's part of the picture."

Lady Margaret was puzzled, and showed herself puzzled.

"He's very good-lookin'," she said.

"Capital," said Hugo.

"He 's so self-possessed and commandin'."

"Better and better," said Hugo.

"I 'm sure I don't know what you mean," she said at the last.

"Then I must have said something out of the common clever," said Hugo, with a bow to the lady; and felt that indeed he had summed Philip up.

"The Young Peer," he said to himself — (the "framing and glazing," and the "in many a cottage home," being later additions) — "The Young Peer!"— and chuckled as one who has made a good joke.

But after all there was always the Malmsey blood in Philip, which sooner or later must show itself. Hugo, Fitz-Rockingham as he was, was rogue enough to see hope for his pattern young relation in that. Miss Dexter's Lord Malmsey — Egbert of the eyes like the sky and the sea, and the leg to judge legs by — had had a reputation . . . ! Those were the brave days of the allied houses of Warbeck and Hinton Dormoral. Every one knew of those days. Lady Malmsey affected to ignore them, spoke always to Philip of the virtue of the Malmseys as if it were stainless — but took care, as we know, to fill Warbeck with Fitz-Rockinghams. At her marriage she had reversed the words of Ruth: "My people shall be thy people (her attitude) and my God thy God." Lord Malmsey had given her trouble; but Lord Malmsey had died, leaving her Philip to educate and a free hand.

So, Philip — and Hugo's hope for him!

For Philip himself Hugo was content with the allusion to Lothair. The cousins were excellent friends, and appre-

ciated each other's qualities, both admiring perhaps what they had not themselves, and neither grudging the other the gifts with which Fate had endowed him.

The October that saw Jezebel on her way home to Hinton Dormoral had come in with fine days in England as across the Channel. The late summer had left the trees well covered, and only now had the night frosts of autumn begun to stain the woods. The chestnuts were amongst the first to change their green for the yellow and orange that presently flamed on the hillsides like beacons and blazed in the valleys. Crimson and scarlet soon showed in the woods, where giant toadstools were red as the dawn and enamelled like fine porcelain. The bracken was soon russet in the park. In the lanes, blackberries painted the hedges; and the berries of the hawthorn and the fat fruit of the dog-rose were like jewels rough-set. Overhead was a sky with a sun in it. The talk was of birds, and of birds, and of birds.

Philip, back from his travels, waiting for the coverts to thin a bit before his big shoot, and with time, at times of the day, on his hands, found his thoughts wandering. Mundham had given them a direction and he let them take it as they would. From having forgotten Jezebel he passed to a condition of remembering her acutely. More, he realized Mundham's description of her, filling in its outlines, and, guided by memory, supplying its deficiencies. In the presentment that he thus conjured up for himself Jezebel's hair made black the dominant note — the blue black (did he know it) of the Dormorals, and the blue black as he knew it of ravens. Against it he saw Jezebel's skin milk-white, lily-white, the white of white things where things are white in the snows; and, out of the whiteness, his thoughts set her eyes shining. He gave her red lips, and a tender flush on the cheeks. In a word, he gave her a dangerous beauty, such as her childhood might have promised and her name seemed to demand.

But he could still hate her, he thought, for the ill she had wrought his mother . . . so near at her hands had Lady Malmsey been to death. The thing was ridiculous: that he knew well; but the intention had been deliberate, and argued his mother not wrong in her rooted abhorrence of the stock whence she sprung — or did not spring! There was always the doubt that lay like a shadow on her birth, and was she not Jezebel? The name, as he said it in thought, gripped his imagination. He spoke it to the woods: Jezebel, Jezebel! How strange it was. It had something of beauty. (It was spoiled by a petting to Jessy.) Jezebel. It was strong, bold, impatient. It was an assertion, a challenge, a blow in the face. It was insistent as scarlet. It was a trumpet blast. It was many things, and, gripping his fancy, it held it, as one holds another till he has forced him to hear what he would say.

All that was happening in the life of the field seemed to have part in the mood that possessed our lordling. It was to the gorgeous days that stained the leaves that he breathed the temptress's name. Soft autumn scents were in his noble nostrils as he tramped the lanes to the tune of his thoughts, and associated themselves so intimately with them that in after years it would need but the smell of autumn foliage, or damp moulds and mosses, to give him back the Jezebel of his imagination. She was sufficiently unlike the real Jezebel — as unlike, indeed (or perhaps just about as like), as is a landscape of October, its flaring colours running riot, to a landscape of verdant June. Both are beautiful, however, and he was right about the beauty of Jezebel. Beauty he gave her freely, and he had not been the son of his father if he had not loved beauty.

Outwardly, Philip's aspect had been much as usual. He did not record every passing emotion upon his face. It was the serenity of his outlook that had piqued Lady Jute, ruffled the bosom of Lady Balltry, and "intrigué-ed" Mrs.

Baskerville; to which ladies, Philip, conscious, it might be, behind the calmness of his expression, of the effect that his personality had upon them, had no mind. If, in turn, he was himself disturbed at this time, he hung out no sign.

The red and the yellow leaves fell and Warbeck filled up for the shooting. With others came Hugo Fitz-Rockingham in excellent spirits, and with stories and a story of the world that he lived in. Mundham had been expected, but sent an excuse. Jezebel had warded off a proposal, had kept him her friend, but shown him that he was not to be her lover.

Then were the days full. In the morning but a moderately early start was made (Philip still liking his "eases"), and shooters, keepers, beaters, and dogs made a long procession that the ladies of the party watched across the park from the terrace, and only from their bedrooms if they were very lazy, indeed. More than one of them picked out Philip from the rest, and remembered the pattern of his stockings, or something about him, the rough cloth of his clothes, or the shape of his feet, or his perfect manners (could n't he individualize a little more, and not be so delightful to every one ?), or the clearness of his steady eye, and sighed and wished it was lunch-time.

One had seen this and one that. Lady Eva Rhys-Wynne, for her blood and her inches known far as Tall Taffy, had noticed his pipe, the way that he put it between his white teeth, his action in striking a match, and was led by her feelings and the keenness of her observation into patent indiscretion. The pipe stuck in her mind. She spoke of it, unable to restrain her enthusiasm. (Heavens, what a giving away !) She said to young Lady Pantatuke, and before Mary Anne, Duchess of Alderney and Sark ("Old Mary Anne of the Channel Islands," whose tongue was a byword from Land's End to Skye, and over half Europe to boot !), that he made a pipe seem not a pipe, but some-

thing you could build a shrine for, and set up and worship. Lady Pantatuke (a widow; she came with her brother), had noticed his exquisite teeth, but was wise, and she only said "Really"; and Eva, the rash and the generous giver, proceeded. She spoke of his hands as he held them about the match in the breeze on the terrace, and wondered irrelevantly what his height was, hazarding "over six feet." Mary Anne of the Channel Islands broke in with a "Just about that — half an inch, perhaps, taller than you, dear"; but Tall Taffy had gone back to the pipe with a "Did you see how he held it by the bowl when he took it out of his mouth to point with the stem of it," before she suddenly stammered and reddened, and thought that it had been better for her, for that morning at least, if the start had been earlier. Old Mary Anne would talk. Lady Pantatuke was smiling.

Old Mary Anne did talk. She talked to Lady Malmsey, and put into her mind, not the idea that she had in her own at the outset, but an idea that was far more disquieting. The one came of the other. (Lady Malmsey should not have been restive.) A son, her grace thought, must be more anxiety than even a daughter. Was n't that so? Lady Malmsey demurred. Philip had never given her an hour's anxiety in his life, and she said so. But, said her grace, Mary Anne, when it should come to marrying? Lady Malmsey said time enough yet. Still, said the Duchess, with half the girls in England setting their caps at him, — and you had only to look at the young women in the house at that moment to see which way the cat jumped for some of 'em, — sooner or later the question of Philip's marriage was bound to be thought of. Why, if Lady Malmsey had heard what she who spoke had heard only that morning!

She was sure that a good-looking son (such a catch as he was, too!) must be an anxiety, while so many girls had their eyes open. After all, they must do the best that they

could for themselves. Look at poor dear Merionethshire's girls, who, while their brother brought back something tinned from the States, had all married Beer, except Eva, and she was looking about her!

Lady Malmsey went off at a tangent to thank Heaven that at least Philip would not have to go out of England for an heiress to wife, and spoke with a certain acerbity.

"Then I just will make her uncomfortable," said old Mary Anne to herself. "I'm to mind my own business, am I? We'll see!"

So, aware of the feud with Hinton Dormoral, she said promptly that, talking of heiresses, she supposed old Dormoral's daughter was nearly grown up, and must be as great a catch in her way as Philip himself.

If an heiress *had* been wanted, she said . . . and left her words to soak in.

Lady Malmsey shuddered. The thing was too dreadful to think of; horrible that it should even have been suggested. The Duchess of Alderney and Sark was a vulgar old woman. A Dexter and Philip. . . . A Dexter and her (Lady Malmsey's) son. . . . A person called Jezebel — branded! Lady Malmsey, when she had had time to collect her thoughts, laughed out, believing that she could afford to laugh; and forgetting what a maker of proverbs has said about laughing and laughers.

The result, however, of the thoughts to which the Duchess's words had given rise was that she began to fight Jezebel with her eyebrows as she had fought Lord Dormoral, in the past, and Miss Dexter.

Some one spoke of Mrs. Baskerville. Mrs. Baskerville's name — question Hugo! — had a tale to it just then; every one in the know knew it; and Lady Malmsey, declaring that society in London must be in a bad way if what he told her was true and such persons were countenanced, contrived presently to aim a shot

in the direction of her enemies. Hugo was chuckling to himself. Philip did not express any opinion at all. He had weighed Mrs. Baskerville long ago, admitting her wonderful looks, but using Fitz-Rockingham scales and not Malmsey.

"She has stayed at Hinton Dormoral, I think," Lady Malmsey said, waiting her chance, and lifted not only her eyebrows but her shoulders.

Hugo said, "Well, she is excellent company."

"That will do, Hugo," said Lady Malmsey, and the subject was dropped, but she had looked at her son to say plainly, "You see. . . ."

Philip saw — saw well enough, and, seeing, found himself called upon to face an approaching and difficult situation. He had entered upon his heritage, had done with Eton and Oxford, and even with travels as travels; Warbeck as his home would see him continually. The flag was even now flying at Hinton Dormoral, which, with Jezebel for its sole mistress, would see Jezebel as continually as Warbeck would see him. Needs must, then, that Jezebel and he should see each other. True, Hinton Dormoral was, as one said, at the far end of the county; but what were a few miles against time? He might not see her for weeks or might see her to-morrow. What to do, with a head that was full of her . . .

His mother would not relent. Nor, with the oak for a symbol to look at, could he reasonably expect her to make any overtures of peace. He did not even know that he wished it, but he did wish — "Young Peer," Model, Pattern, or whatever you like to call him with Hugo! — that he knew how to meet the embarrassing case. He wanted to do conflicting things: to cut Jezebel dead, and to let childish bygones be bygones; to make her his friend, and to show himself her foe; to disapprove of her mightily, and to admire all that she did; to love her and to hate her, in fine.

What would happen he knew not, but that something would happen, that Jezebel's life and his own were to impinge at a point, he began to be sure. Not for nothing was he thinking of her so fervently while blackberries ripened and mellow leaves fell.

## CHAPTER VI

PHILIP had a favourite dog named Peter — a Dane. Peter was a dog of pedigree, pride, and many prizes. Peter was slate-blue, and moved with noble undulations of his long body. Children were afraid of Peter, and ladies, when they saw him with his master on the roads, or at railway stations, or where else you please, called him audibly a Beautiful Fellow; but if they had with them any little dogs caught them up, as if Peter might be expected to eat them. "Floss" or "Molly" or "Tiny" or "Ruff," held under an apprehensive arm against a body that turned as on a pivot, and barking from the safety of her position for all she was worth, was a sight that Peter knew well, and heeded as little. He regarded such small fry with high contempt, nor did he fight with the opposite sex! The mistresses of such rats as Floss, Molly, Tiny, and Ruff were fools for their pains. They were not quite such fools when they called "Czar" or "Lion" or "Bully-Boy" shrilly to heel. Peter was by no means averse to a fight, but give him an adversary worthy his prowess.

The week of the big shoot at Warbeck had seen Philip too much occupied to allow Peter his usual share of his master's company. The dog was friendly to most people; suffered much promiscuous attention when Warbeck was full; was civil even when he was bored (— a gentleman, Peter! Tall Taffy had tried him with an adulation of which he may be suspected himself to be but the vicarious object; and Mary Anne of the Channel Islands with her "Don't come near me"); but his master alone had his affection. Philip, then, sensible of having seemed neglectful, held himself in Peter's debt, and, having occasion to ride in the direction of Ettram (and Hinton Dormoral by

the same token!), to a distant spot on the estate to look at some planting that had recently been done, took Peter along with him.

"Has he had a dull week?" he said from his saddle, as they set out across the park. "Would n't they let him go with master when he went shooting? Did Nell and Fanny crow over him then? Shame! But he shall have a nice run with master this morning."

Peter expressed his delight. Philip was moved to admire him. He was a subject for sculpture; he ought to be recorded in bronze. He should strain at a leash. An athlete it should be should hold him. . . .

It had rained in the night, but a wind had dried the roads. There was an air that was clean and reminiscent of rain. Peter had a working nostril for the scents of the day, and, with the prospect of two or three hours of his master's society, not a care in the world. His life was made up of good things. He was in every ditch at the starting — as any fox-terrier. Here a rabbit had been for his pleasure; there a rat. Possibilities lurked under every bush. By the stream was the faint drag of an otter, and on the highroad near the cross-roads where you turned off for Cattleford, a fox had passed not an hour before. . . . Was life good, do you think, in a day of such thrilling excitements?

An excitement more thrilling than any of these was in store for him. It came on the way home when Philip, realizing that he was but a few miles from Hinton Dormoral, made for a certain road where he believed a view of the Castle might be obtained over the trees.

The impertinence! Think of it — that, when you had been the only Danish hound in the county, another, slate-blue as yourself, lithe, lean without thinness, muscular, wiry — like yourself in every respect, should dare to show his handsome and impudent head! There was a

time to listen to the call of your master, and a time to consider what you owed to yourself.

The two great dogs walked round one another. There was a moment of stillness when each seemed to wait for the other to move—a tense moment when peace was stretched to a breaking point. Now they might trot quietly away. Almost it appeared as if they would. Philip's whistle sounded shrill on the breeze. He was coming. Peter looked towards him from the tail of his eye, but did not move. Some one else was coming. There was another shrill whistle. "Peter," shouted Philip, "Peter." "Skoal," cried another voice, "Skoal." The dogs prepared to obey, but met each other's eyes. It was then or never. They were at one another's throats.

Philip, riding up at that moment, leapt to the ground, and, looking hastily round him, espied a gate-post on which he might slip his horse's bridle. As he turned from doing this he recognized Jezebel, and sprang forward.

"Keep back," he cried to her above the tumult of the fight. "Keep back. You 'll be bitten."

He laid his crop roundly about the fighting beasts and tried to grip Peter by the collar. The dogs fought like tigers. It was impossible to get hold of one or other. Now Peter was uppermost, now his antagonist. The combat was like to be equal. Jaws were of iron on either side; throats were of brass. Hell was let loose, you had said, by the uproar. Useless to command or to threaten. The taming influences of centuries had gone in the shutting and the opening of an eye, and primitive instincts leapt out of sleep. So fight savage things on the plains or in the heart of the jungle. The road had been empty. Faces appeared over a hedge. Futile advice was tendered and drowned in the noise of the fighting. A ploughman said something about a pail o' water; another spoke vaguely of pitchforks, but kept out of the way. A woman who lived at a cottage hard by ran for pepper, and some school

children turning a bend in the road screamed and fled, but came back to look on from a safe distance, and added the noise of their cries to the noises that tore the air, hacked and jagged it. Philip's horse tugged at its bridle unheeded till one of the ploughmen bethought him to go to its head. There was blood on Philip's hand — whether his own or not he scarcely knew. The dog called Skoal seemed to be bleeding from a wound on the shoulder. Peter had blood about his mouth. Philip set his teeth and dropping on one knee succeeded in catching Peter's collar. He dragged the dog backwards, Skoal holding on. Then Jezebel, who despite Philip's protests had not been an idle spectator of the fray, flung herself upon her dog, and, clasping him round the neck, managed to hold him and pull him away. He had no collar and the thing was bravely done.

Across the panting and snarling beasts Philip and Jezebel faced each other. They, too, were breathless.

"Take your dog away, please," said Jezebel. "I can't hold mine."

She saw the blood on his hand as she spoke.

"Your hand —" she said. "You 've been bitten."

"It is nothing," he said ; "a scratch."

Her own words and his stirred a memory. Another was stirred, and another when he threw her his handerchief. A handkerchief, it seemed, was to play a part at every turn in her life.

"Make a collar of that," he said quickly.

She did as he told her and then held her dog more securely. Philip cuffed Peter mildly to show him he was in disgrace till there should be an opportunity of chastising him.

"I am sorry," he said, "that my dog behaved so badly. He will not again when I 've taught him his lesson."

"My dog was as much to blame."

"You might have been bitten. You — you were splendidly plucky."

The boyish words slipped out. The thought, rather, took schoolboy form in spite of his years and his dignity. He was a boy when all 's said.

"I? Nonsense. You were bitten. Your hand. The place ought to be washed. Was it your dog or mine? How much alike they are! (Quiet, Skoal!) Does it hurt you?"

The ploughman who had succeeded in calming the horse now approached and was joined by his comrade, who, seeing the dogs safely held, came down from the field where the two had been working. The school children drew near.

"A scratch," Philip said again. "Peter, I think, and he 's healthy — as your dog. It is nothing, I assure you. I 'll attend to it."

The first ploughman joined in. It was a nasty thing a bite. You never could tell. There was a man over at Mosset's at Cattleford who was bitten by a sheep-dog (the second ploughman shook his head in melancholy confirmation of what was coming and rubbed his chin) — a sheep-dog he 'd known from a pup —

"And if you 'll believe me sir —"

"Yes, yes," said Philip, "I know. Take the tale to the Peal of Bells, is it? — the Harp, then, and wish me better luck."

He threw the man a shilling, averting a story of horror, and turned to Jezebel.

But the man had to thank him long-windedly and admire the dogs, hazarding guesses at their breed. Bloodhounds, perhaps? Well, proper fighters, whatever they were. The second ploughman from the beginning had been ready to bet on the gentleman's dog. Gentleman's! — gentleman's, indeed! His lordship's. It was the woman who had come back with the pepper. The men touched sheepish foreheads. The school children, who had collected and stood in an interested semi-circle about the group in the road, pulled at their hats and bobbed hurried curtseys.

"It 's been a dreadful fright for you, too, my lady," said the woman, anxious to show that she recognized Jezebel also, and the children curtsied again or touched eager headgear. "It 's a providential mercy that you was n't hurt. But there, dogs will fight; it 's their nature, as you may say. How they do pant, to be sure. Just like so many steam-engines. Would they like a drop of water, do you think?"

"Yes, try 'em with water," said the first ploughman. "It 's a sure sign. I 've heard they won't look at it if—"

"The Harp waits for your company," said Philip.

The men took the hint.

Once more he turned to Jezebel.

"Hodge would condemn me to torment," he said, smiling, "and bury me, too, out of hand."

"You have n't any anxiety?" she said seriously.

"None."

His voice reassured her.

"I am sure you need have none," she said.

She looked from Peter to Skoal, who still growled from time to time, but showed signs of exhaustion.

"Your dog is n't hurt?" Philip asked her.

"Only tired," she answered. "He 'll sleep it off. I was proud of him. (You dare growl, sir!) Were n't you of yours? I 've only had him a few weeks. Is n't he beautiful? I bought him from an innkeeper in the Black Forest. He is a pure Dane, and belonged—"

She broke off.

"I won't keep you," she said. "Have the bite washed—now, at that cottage, and tie up your hand. Oh, I have your handkerchief. Here, take mine. It 's too small for a dog-collar, but it will go round your hand. Please! . . . And go at once to the cottage. Good-bye."

He looked back seven years. Were they to part strangers? Unthinkable! Her clear eyes were on his.

"Good-bye, Miss Dexter."

The colour mounted to her cheeks.

"Good-bye, Lord Malmsey."

She spoke after the briefest pause. In it her eyes took a questioning look. She, too, had looked back from the impersonal present to the personal past.

Then she went, leading Skoal by the collar.

He watched her out of sight. When she disappeared at the bend in the road, he accompanied the Pepper Woman to her cottage, and allowed her to see his wound, which, though not serious, was less slight than he had supposed. She bathed it carefully, and bound it about with Jezebel's handkerchief, chatting volubly the while.

It was this and it was the other thing, but chiefly a "providential mercy" — (the words a standing dish with her) — that the time of year was favourable. If it had happened in summer now . . . the dog days . . . ! That was the time when bites mattered. Still, she supposed for precaution he'd have his dog shot.

"Shot!"

Philip laughed at her. He went his way smiling.

In conscious disgrace Peter waited his beating. He waited in vain. Perhaps his master thought the two dogs had punished each other sufficiently. Perhaps he thought of other things, and forgot. Perhaps . . . he did not think now that Peter's action merited castigation. Be which as it may, Peter went uncorrected.

## CHAPTER VII

"So, Master Malmsey!" Jezebel said to herself, and walked home with a curious expression. It was not the fight of the dogs that kept her heart beating and made her eyes shine. Nor when she said, "So, Master Malmsey," as she did many times, did she know why something of triumph, actual or prospective, invested the meaningless phrase with a meaning. "So, Master Malmsey" — the phrase was a phrase for one who else had cried "Check!" Yet in no way could "Check!" be deemed applicable to the situation. The analogy held but in so far as "I wait your next move" was implied in the one and the other.

The day had taken point for what had happened. There had not before been such hues in the fields and the hedges, the sky and the woods on the hills. Every outline was sharper. The earth had not before smelled so pungent, nor what birds there were singing sung quite as they sang.

Miss Dexter saw her niece as she came in. She looked at her steadily as she advanced, and was moved to give voice to her thoughts.

"Well, my girl," she said, "you're monstrous good-looking, I must say; I don't think I knew how good-looking. You've an air too. . . . I wish that your father could see you this minute. What's happened?"

Jezebel questioned her with her eyes.

"Do I please you?" she said.

"So well," said Miss Dexter, "I see I shan't have you for long."

Jezebel laughed.

"Skoal's a bad dog," she said lightly. "The devil's been fighting."

Miss Dexter took cursory stock of him.

"There is a letter for you," she said shortly, and went in.

All letters and mention of letters sent Jezebel's thoughts at this time to a letter that had not been written and a letter that daily she expected to receive. She looked with apprehension at any handwriting that was unfamiliar to her, and saw her pale mother behind every pothook. Her conscience was pricking her. To-morrow and to-morrow she had been saying to herself for some months. Each day as it passed made the task of writing more difficult. If she had written at once — when Mr. Waddifer was in communication with the poor lady. . . . Now it was almost impossible. And the odd part of it was (Jezebel expressed herself so to herself), that she bore Mrs. Riversley no ill-will whatsoever; did not blame her, nor bemoan her, nor feel towards her the smallest resentment. The "poor lady," however, and the "Mrs. Riversley" that alternated with "Mother" in her thoughts of her, were significant of the place that her surviving parent held in her life. She thought of her indeed as of a relation of her father — as of one connected with her but through him; and as the daughter of a second marriage might think of her father's first wife, or her mother's first husband. Her mother was her mother for all that, and the way that she thought of her was but stronger witness of the wrong that had been done.

She followed her aunt into the house. The letter lay on the hall table. It was not from her mother, and Jezebel breathed, as she had so often breathed, the sigh of relief and reprieve.

Mrs. Baskerville had written to ask her to the Abbey.

Miss Dexter supposed she would go, and Jezebel surprised her by shaking her head.

"N — no," said Jezebel. "Not yet."

"You must n't shut yourself up."

"So she tells me — calling me Dearest, and asking how long I shall mourn."

She gave the note to her aunt. It was written on heavy paper, embossed with a curious device that was neither crest nor monogram, and a faint scent recalled the writer. The envelope was sealed with white sealing wax in which the legend, *We Live*, ran between two lotus flowers.

Miss Dexter took the note. She read a word or so aloud: "No party." . . . "A man or two"; and some names: Reggies and Bobbies and Monties. "Still, your father liked her," she said, and "Why don't you go?"

"I will go," Jezebel said, "but not yet."

"As you like," said Miss Dexter. "You were wishing for a little excitement, that 's all; and you would not find the Abbey dull if I know my lady. 'Quiet,' 'peace of the country,' 'no party!' Look at her seal. A word in your ear: now or later, Be careful!"

"Later," said Jezebel, smiling.

She could not go now. Hinton Dormoral might be as dull as it liked. The elements of excitement were no longer wanting. Skoal had fought well. He did not know that he was fighting for his mistress. Fate chose blind instruments ever. Jezebel fondled his head. Yes, let him lie down by the fire and rest. She knelt beside him on the rug, and fell into a reverie. Philip had a place in it; her handkerchief; his; and another. Her life was a story of handkerchiefs. She smiled absently, looking deeply into the fire.

Her dreaming was vague, and mere drifting on eddies of thought, and she roused herself presently to recollect her impressions. There had been the blank road with the turning before her and Skoal, like the scout he was, running ahead. He had disappeared at the curve. When she reached it there seemed to be two Skoals in front of her. While she yet gazed at them in wonder, and before the

sight had explained itself, the storm had burst. Across pandemonium, bedlam, the witch's caldron, she saw that the man who had leapt from his horse was — Philip!

Her action in attempting to separate the fighting dogs was almost unconsciously taken. She could remember the feel of the struggling animals under her hand. Then she remembered a little tremor that seized her when she saw blood on the hand of Philip. After that she hurried, in her remembrance of incident, to his tribute to her courage. She had not known she showed any particular bravery. She drew a long breath.

Something shot at that moment between her and the Philip of her thoughts, recalling her sharply to herself.

When she looked to see what it was that had fallen, she found Mrs. Baskerville's letter on the rug beside her. It had slipped from the mantelpiece where she had put it when her aunt gave it back to her. Should she go after all?

"Dearest," and "I know I shall love you," and "How long do you mourn?" and "Remember you are coming to me in the spring, but come now — for a preliminary canter." Mrs. Baskerville the woman expressed herself in every line. A postscript said, "Your name is delicious"; another, "You will have a great success with me in London."

The device upon the note-paper showed itself, when Jezebel examined it closely, to be a pomegranate. It sent her thoughts to the love-song of love-songs and Solomon. She was made to think of its many symbols — honey; apples; lilies; vines; wines; pleasant fruits; dew; perfumes; spices: "camphire with spikenard, spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices." She walked in the Garden of Nuts.

When she looked at the white seal, with the lotus blossoms and its legend, the significance of it was illumined,

and *We Live* eloquent in its simplicity. Her Aunt Dexter was probably wise in her warning.

It was no shrinking, however, from possible danger that determined Lord Dormoral's daughter to refuse for just then Mrs. Baskerville's invitation. The Jezebel who had run riot at school, defying the laws and exulting in mischief, had had reliance enough on herself to have small fear or none of such snares as might lurk in the Garden of Nuts. Rather would the knowledge of risk give an edge to her experiences there. She even wished (or I think it) to know what it was to be tempted.

But she wished for something else more, and wrote her note that day. "Later" was the burden of it, with the assurance that she looked forward to her London campaign. She smiled at a flying thought — "Mrs. Baskerville brought Miss Dexter"; "Mrs. Baskerville and Miss Dexter"; "Miss Dexter, who came under the wing of Mrs. Baskerville," — and sniffed coming triumphs. She looked at Mrs. Baskerville's letter to see how it was ended, and read, "Your affectionate Dolly." As she did so she saw the postscript once more which told her her name was delicious. She signed it in full.

"'Jessy' spoils it," she said to herself, little conscious that Philip Malmsey, dreaming at Warbeck, and in laxer mood than a few of his acquaintances would have thought possible to him, had recently been thinking the same thing. "'Jessy' spoils it. In future I 'm Jezebel Dexter."

The name accorded at least with the spirit of the Garden of Nuts, where the vine flourished and the pomegranates budded.

She could not write to her mother that day.

Then came the days of the happening of nothing. Such was life, Jezebel knew, but she set her teeth for all that. People were calling at Hinton Dormoral. Jezebel looked towards the door when Buckram opened it to announce them, but her face always fell when she heard what

names he had to speak; and a visitor or two went away with an odd impression of her. It was said in the county that she had the manners of all the Dexters. (So indirectly did Warbeck affect Hinton Dormoral.) Jezebel, when she had been out, went always now upon her return to the array of cards on the hall table. Sometimes a letter startled her, but her mother did not write, and Jezebel, thinking of other things, did not write either. Callers, cards, cards. . . . Weech, Ortolan, Flack; people meant to be friendly. Then why did their cards but infuriate her?

A fortnight had passed since the fight of the dogs, when one day her restless feet took her to the scene of it. Mist hung about the roads, and distances were grey rather than blue. Her mood was in tune with the sombre outlook. Nature brooded on the dying year. Winter had come.

The road was empty when she reached it. There, by the milestone telling the distance to Uncton and Cattleford, was the spot where she had held Skoal; there, on the pathway, Philip had held Peter. She could see the dogs panting, snarling, and Peter straining at his collar. Up there, to the left, the two fools of ploughmen had hung over the hedge.

The road was empty. What had she come for? While she loitered desultorily, asking herself the futile question, she became conscious that she was observed.

The cottage where, at her suggestion, Philip had attended to his wound was a few yards higher up the road, from which the garden in front of it was raised a couple of feet. In this garden, which commanded the place where Jezebel stood, as a grand stand a racecourse, the Pepper Woman was taking some clothes from the line on which they were hanging, and had paused in her work to watch her. The Pepper Woman curtsied as Jezebel became aware of her presence, and hastened to wish her good-morning (interpolating that it was not much of a morning

at best if one must admit it to be seasonable), and trusted she found herself none the worse for the "turn" the dogs must have given her.

Jezebel professed herself none the worse.

"Or else," said the Pepper Woman, she was sure it had made her own blood run cold in her veins to see the young lady and his lordship trying to separate the combatants. Regular raging, wild, wild beasts they was, and his lordship bitten and all.

"Lord Malmsey was not *badly* bitten?" Jezebel asked.

In a moment she pictured him suffering. She experienced a tremor from her hair to the soles of her feet. How strange was "the way of a man with a maid!" Jezebel read herself then. The moment was "open." What had Philip (she hardly knew him) to do with her case? What had she herself to do with it? A memory, a name, an idea . . . the chain that bound her was made of such links! She was face to face with forces she did not understand. Who was she — to think to understand them?

The Pepper Woman was answering her. She had forgotten the Pepper Woman, and came back to her and to the present as one who recovers from a swoon.

Well not badly, the Pepper Woman declared, and yet badly enough. She would not go so far as to say to the bone, but the skin was broken.

Jezebel could have shaken her.

"But it 's going on well. Indeed it 's quite healed."

"How do you know?" Jezebel asked her quickly.

"He's been round this way twice, miss. What for I don't know, except just to look at the place."

"To look at the place?"

"He came and he stood in the road — just as you did yourself, miss."

"Lord Malmsey has been here?"

"I see him from this garden."

Jezebel set her face homewards and walked upon air.

She breathed, as she went, Christmas sentiments. The sum of her thoughts would have decorated a December church. . . . Peace — there was peace in them; she sang as she walked (Offenbach, "Si vous croyez") — and good-will to men. He, too, was disturbed, was he? So, Master Malmsey!

A sound of wheels and the jog-trot of hoofs made her turn.

## CHAPTER VIII

THE conveyance that was known in the neighbourhood as the Fly-from-the-Ram-at-Uncton was of antiquated shape. It was heavy, cumbersome, grotesque, and it lumbered. Its boot took you back to the days of posting; its wheels to the youth of the world. You would not have chartered the Fly-from-the-Rammertuncton (to write the word as it was spoken), for any choice other than Hobson's. The Fly-from-the-Ram was the last resource of the carriage-and-horseless, strangers, the unmet. Notably the unmet.

The venerable chariot overtook, on the flat, the young woman who was walking on air, and overtook her, to be overtaken in turn on the hill. It had one occupant. Jezebel caught a glimpse of dark clothes, little more, and wondered idly who might be travelling a road that led, roughly speaking, to Hinton Dormoral only. To be sure you could go through the village, and, leaving the lodge gates at the foot of the park on your left, reach Ettram by roundabout ways, and presently Cattleford, skirting Flack in the hinderparts on your route, and the woods of Ortolan. But the road the fly was taking was the road proper for Hinton Dormoral, and nowhere else.

The driver, old Tom o' the Ram, to the country-side round, antique as his vehicle, and slow of sight in his later decades, did not recognize the air-walker till the second time of passing her, when he touched his hat with a haste, the intention of which was obviously apologetic and retrospective in its significance. She smiled as she saw him repeat the action "to himself" once or twice, evidently going over the incident in his mind, and his seeming lapse of manners, as he did so. She could well believe that upon

his box the while he was soliloquizing as any mummer in any play of the old make.

Flat road succeeded the hill. Jezebel was left behind. The road turned; the fly with it, and was out of sight. She walked briskly, thinking of other things, and perhaps of one person, and did not expect to see Tom o' the Ram with his chariot any more. She was surprised, then, when a few minutes later on reaching the corner, she saw that he had drawn up at the side of the road a couple of hundred yards ahead of her, and that a lady had alighted and was coming towards her. It seemed to be for the purpose of speaking to her that the lady was afoot, and wondering what had happened, Jezebel advanced to meet her.

The day was now beginning to close in. Grey mists were creeping up the valley, and there was but a lighter greyness in the west where the sun was sinking. The damp air was very still. No birds sang to the short twilight. Four o'clock struck, slowly and distinctly, from the church tower a mile away.

Jezebel, advancing herself, watched the lady advance. Not till she was quite near to her did a suspicion of her identity come to her. Then suddenly standing still she waited for her to speak. It was Jezebel, however, who had to speak first.

"Are you . . .?" she said, hardly above her breath.

The bowed head with the trembling veil answered her.

"My mother!"

The lady nodded again, turned away, and burst into tears.

There was a little pause after that. Jezebel saw that old Tom o' the Ram, unable, probably, to see so far down the road, was employing the moments of leisure in polishing his harness. He looked from time to time in the direction his fare had taken.

"You were coming to see me?" Jezebel said.

"To see if you would see me."

"Of course I would see you."

"I was not sure."

"I meant to have written," said Jezebel, somewhat lamely. "I was going to write to-day. I have been meaning to write every day, but I think to-day I should have written. Of course I should have seen you. I . . . am very glad to see you. I've wanted to know you."

Her mother struggled for her handkerchief.

"I could not tell," she said, drying her eyes, and a stray thought of handkerchiefs set Jezebel's thoughts wandering. She recalled them as soon as might be.

"I wish I had written," she said. "Please believe. I have often thought of you. I know, you know. Father spoke of you . . . blamed himself . . . (not that it would have made any difference with me) . . . Mr. Waddifer told you all this?"

"I saw Mr. Waddifer. Your father was very generous. I'm glad he knew. It would have spared me something if he had said sooner that he exonerated me in some measure, but —"

"Father didn't think very seriously of these things," Jezebel said, and was half sorry for her words when they were spoken.

She saw that they did not help matters, but rather were painful to her mother, who looked at her quickly, and, Jezebel thought, with misgiving. She hastened to remove, if it might be, the impression they had produced.

"I am glad you came," she said, and went nearer to her. She took her mother's arm. "Let us go on to Hinton Dormoral. It isn't much further. You'll stop with me."

Mrs. Riversley shook her head.

"I only wanted to see you. I was going to keep the fly waiting — indeed, I was going to send a note up by any messenger I could find, to know if you were in and

would see me. I came down last night. It was a sudden thought — I 'm so little in England. I ought to have telegraphed, of course, but somehow I did not. I trusted to chance, and, as I say, I came away on the impulse of the moment. I had n't made plans."

Mrs. Riversley had summed herself up in the speech, and seemed to know it, for she looked at her daughter as one who would say, "Bear with me."

Jezebel had no inclination to do anything else, but it was perhaps because she feared to be critical, because tears did not come easily to her and were somewhat incomprehensible to her in others, and because she felt that never, never, never would she be able to understand, that she drew her mother towards her and kissed her.

"You must stay with me," she said; "you must, indeed. We will send for your things."

"Oh," said Mrs. Riversley, "I don't think I could. People . . ."

"You need see no one you don't wish to see. We won't be at home to any one. We 'll spend the days together."

Mrs. Riversley shook her head again.

"I am going home the day after to-morrow — Florence. I live there now almost entirely. We have an apartment. I think I ought not to stay — on your account. So far I have n't been recognized. I had never been to the Ram. I was n't known there. They took my name wrongly, too. They thought I said Rivers, and I let it pass. People would only say — "

"Let them say!" said Jezebel.

Mrs. Riversley looked up the road and down it. Her forehead was puckered with doubt.

"The servants — " she began.

"You must have seen them, anyway," Jezebel said, "even if you had only come for an hour."

She spoke partly to combat her mother's objections, partly, in spite of herself, to point the obvious.

"I know, I know," said Mrs. Riversley. "I hoped I might not be recognized, or that there might not be any one at Hinton Dormoral who was there when I was. I suppose Buckram is still with you . . . I . . . don't know what I thought. I only felt I must see you."

"Buckram is still there, and his wife and Mrs. Rumbold. The other indoor servants have changed often enough, I daresay. There is still Weston. You need n't mind her."

"It would be very painful to me. It 's not that, though. At least, it 's not only that. I am thinking of you."

"And I," said Jezebel, "am as indifferent to public opinion as my father was."

Again she felt that she had made her mother wince.

"Let us dispose of me," she said, and spoke gently. "I want you to come. I am only sorry and ashamed not to have written. You will be sincerely welcome. I know I can speak for Aunt Dexter as well as myself."

The mention of Miss Dexter put something that was more apprehensive still into Mrs. Riversley's face. It was a pale face (she had raised a thick veil), very pretty, Jezebel thought, and very pathetic and "helpless." Not all the troubles to which it had been turned robbed it of youthfulness.

"How young you are," Jezebel said, as she looked into the tearful eyes. "I believe I look as old. You might be my sister. Come with me. I am going to insist."

Mrs. Riversley suffered herself to be persuaded.

"You — you will prepare your aunt for seeing me," she said with a little gasp. "You will see her first, promise me."

"We will dismiss the fly at the lodge," said Jezebel, "and walk up, and I will see Aunt Dexter. You need have no fear that she won't receive you kindly. She never bore you any ill-will. It was all a — misunderstanding."

"A misunderstanding!" Jezebel's mother said; "a misunderstanding! — yes, I suppose, a misunderstanding."

To this Jezebel made no answer.

"It will be best," she said, "to send one of the men for your luggage. Old Tom o' the Ram would be all night about it. How I wish I had known you were at Uncton. I would have sent for you — gone over to fetch you. I ought to have written; it all works round to that. Come, let us go."

She walked on a few yards ahead of her mother to where the fly was standing. The old man was lighting his lamps. Jezebel gave him his directions briskly, and a few moments later the chariot continued its interrupted journey.

Mrs. Riversley sat back at first, but presently leaned forward to look out of the windows.

"I remember this," she said, "and that," as they lumbered past things that had once been familiar. "And, oh," she said, as they reached the village and drew near the end of their drive, "are you sure — are you sure I had not better turn back?"

"Quite sure," said Jezebel.

Her decision was in marked contrast to her mother's wavering. It seemed, by the side of such painful perplexity, almost brutal to be calm. She laid a strong arm upon one of her mother's.

"I wish you could know," she said.

Her mother looked grateful.

"I — I don't know what to call you."

"Jessy," said Jezebel, "they call me at home, and at school I was J. But I like my own name best."

"No, no," her mother said quickly, and said nothing more for a moment or two.

They rolled by the Post-Chaise and Compasses. She looked at the porch and the eaves with eyes dimmed again, Jezebel saw.

"Nothing is changed," she said. "It is all as I knew it. The shop has a new front, though. It was kept by an old man —"

"Old Meridew, Bethesda's grandfather. He died."

"Bethesda?"

"She was one of my nurses — a nursery-maid, rather, with Weston. She must have come after you w — afterwards."

"I recollect her. It was she I saw when —" She broke off. "You don't remember me?" she said.

Jezebel looked at her curiously and shook her head.

"How could I?"

"Yes," Mrs. Riversley said, and seemed to be speaking to herself, "How could you?"

The George the Fourth stirred for her a fresh chord of memory. There was a dog-cart. A name struggled to come at her bidding from the recesses of her mind.

"Daniel Har — Harburton? Harbord?" she said aloud.

"Harbury," Jezebel said absently. She was thinking.

The strangeness of life, as life was presented to her, was momentarily revealing itself. This woman, of whom she knew less than she knew of Eve or Queen Anne, was her mother — had borne her. She felt as a person might feel to whom one had come from the dead.

Her mother was speaking. A difficulty had occurred to her about the removal of her belongings from the hotel at Uncton. She had come down without her maid, to whom she had given a couple of days' holiday, and how were her things to be packed? There was, of course, very little to pack, but what there was would have to be collected together.

"I 'll send Didgy," said Jezebel.

"Your maid?"

"Yes, Weston."

The difficulty was laid.

"I am glad Weston 's with you," Mrs. Riversley said, a few moments later.

"You liked her?"

"She once did me a kindness."

There was silence between them again. The road had been newly mended with stones, and the jolting of the carriage made an excuse for any disinclination to talk. The steam-roller, which had arrived that afternoon from St. Eldreds, had not yet begun its work. It stood cold and black by the wayside, and the horse from the Ram pretended to shy in passing it. The fly lurched as it ploughed through the flints. Leaving them was like sailing out of a storm into smooth water.

Jezebel put her head out of the window. The gates and the lodge were in sight.

"Stop here," she said.

The fly was dismissed, and went back to the Ram with a message that promised a messenger, and, doubtless, what surmises its bearer may have formed for himself as to the nature of the meeting at which, albeit from a distance that put it to all intents and purposes out of the range of his sight, he might be said to have assisted.

Mrs. Riversley looked nervously round in the park. The tower stood up above the trees.

"Did you know Lady Malmsey?" Jezebel asked her with seeming irrelevancy.

"Yes. Not very well. She used to call on me formally."

"She does n't, on me," said Jezebel, without thought.

Mrs. Riversley stood still. Tears found their way to her eyes once more, under the veil that shrouded her face. Jezebel could not see them, but she could hear them in her mother's voice.

"I ought n't to have come," Mrs. Riversley said. "I ought to have considered. Let me go back. Please let me go back. I have injured you enough as it is."

Jezebel saw what she had done.

"Oh, my dear mother," she said, "if you knew how little I care for what 's said or what 's thought. I made an enemy of the Malmsey woman as Aunt Dexter calls her, on my own account. A little girl ill-wished her and one

of her trees was struck by lightning. A little girl ill-wished her again and she — (it chanced so, I tell you !) — was sick and nearly died. She does n't love one whom the Powers that be have favoured so unscrupulously."

She paused, and a thought of Philip came to her.

"I may or I may n't have the laugh of her yet. We shall see."

"Here we are," she said presently. "Wait for me a moment. I'll go and speak to Aunt Dexter."

She disappeared and returned a few minutes later.

## CHAPTER IX

The sojourn of Jezebel's mother at Hinton Dormoral lasted a week and outwardly passed smoothly enough. No urgings, however, could induce her to prolong her visit beyond those limits. She was troubled in spirit, restless, apprehensive, and Jezebel, divining herself powerless to overcome her mother's uneasiness in places so intimately associated with an unhappy part of an unhappy life, was compelled to admit the wisdom of her determination. On the last evening something more akin to an understanding came about between mother and daughter, but not before each had despaired many times of understanding or being understood. One approach to a disagreement there was; but of this and the incident of the last evening, presently.

Miss Dexter received her former sister-in-law as if nothing had happened or they had parted but yesterday.

"Well, Pussy, 's that you?" was her greeting, and Jezebel's mother breathed a "Yes, Betty, it 's me."

Miss Dexter kissed her kindly, but without any emotion, and commented upon the gloom of the day.

"Ring for tea and the lamps," she said to Jezebel; and to Jezebel's mother, "You came down from London?"

"Last night."

"You left fog, I dare swear. I think London detestable. Come to the fire. The room is n't much changed, is it? Yes, the screen there 's new. Edward used to complain of a draught from the windows. By which same token I 'm knitting warm socks for the poor. Do you embroider as beautifully as ever? You did church work, I remember, better than any one I ever knew. I never had patience myself for fidgety things of the sort. Won't you take off your cloak?"

Mrs. Riversley's sables were heavy.

"In a moment," she said.

She glanced towards the door, and her daughter guessed that she wanted their shelter in the dreaded moment which must come when the servant who had known her should appear.

"I will say a word to Buckram," Jezebel said, stooping over her to speak under her breath. "I know what you feel. He won't be surprised. . . . Speak to him when he comes in as you would to any old servant."

She left the room, and her mother turned to Miss Dexter.

"Betty," she said timidly, "do you — do you think I ought to stay?"

"To be sure," said Miss Dexter. "Why not?"

"After all that has happened . . ."

"What 's done 's done," said Miss Dexter. "That was my brother's view. It is mine, and it 's certainly Jessy's. Nobody held you to blame."

Mrs. Riversley seemed taken aback. Miss Dexter's attitude of beneficent indifference and cordial tolerance, was not less disconcerting, to one of such a temperament as that which had wrecked the life of Jezebel's mother, than would have been censure or aloofness or covert disapproval. Miss Dexter took everything as a matter of course, and poor Mrs. Riversley, accustomed to think of herself as one whom people could not be asked to know unless they "knew," and if they "knew," would not know, had never ceased to look upon herself as a sinner and an outcast.

A footman appeared with a couple of lamps. She glanced at him hurriedly, saw that she did not know him and looked relieved. He lighted a third lamp, drew the curtains, and left the room.

It was humiliating to be so nervous, but Buckram had always been terrible. The other servants used to be afraid

of him. She herself, his mistress, had been afraid of him. Never so much as now.

Yet the moment when it came was not so dreadful.

Jezebel came back as tea made its appearance, and with a "You remember Buckram, mother," gave her her cue.

"I hope you are well, Buckram," Mrs. Riversley said.

Buckram bowed his "Quite well, 'm, I thank you. I hope you are well"; and the tension was over.

Mrs. Riversley loosened her cloak and slipped out of it. She glanced gratefully at her daughter, who busied herself with the tea-things.

But the influences of the spot were potent.

How well she remembered this room! Here Lord Dormoral used to sit. The walls were lined with book-shelves. (She had never cared for reading.) There were many books upon them which she used to think dreadful. Above the book-shelves there was a blue paper with stars upon it. She remembered those stars. They had looked down upon her great unhappiness, and then upon a happiness that was a greater unhappiness still. It was in this room that she had first met Arthur Riversley. He was distantly her kinsman (whose kith and kin were so few), but she had not known him till he came to stay at Hinton Dormoral. He stayed often at the Castle after that. It was in this room that, with no guilt between them then but the tacit knowledge of their mutual love, they avoided each the eyes of the other . . .

The room was the same — the books, the stars. Nothing was changed; Miss Dexter was sitting in Lord Dormoral's chair, that was all — no, not Betty Dexter, but she, she herself! She looked with fascinated gaze at the arms, worn a little where his arms used to rest on them, and sought some excuse for changing her seat. She pleaded the heat of the fire and moved. Then the chair stood empty, and she fancied Lord Dormoral looked

at her from it, as so often he had looked at her with his burning eyes; and Jezebel saw her shudder. She could not eat, and put down her cup, the tea in it almost untasted.

Dinner that night was something of an ordeal for every one. Jezebel's mother had acquired none of that freedom from the trammels of conventional thought, which, to most women in an invidious position, becomes second nature, and is for arms and an armour. Miss Dexter ill-concealed an impatience that was tempered with good-nature.

"Heavens, Pussy!" she said, at a juncture when reason seemed like to be denied a hearing, "are n't you Jessy's mother? Why can't she be seen with you? Do, for mercy's sake, let us see things as they are, and not as they ought to be!"

"It 's because I see things as they are," Mrs. Riversley said.

Jezebel talked tactfully, avoiding personal matters. More clearly every moment, however, was the mystery of her mother's story made plain to her. Jezebel had known her father, and — flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone — had understood him as we understand ourselves. His marriage with her mother could at its outset have held no promise of success.

Miss Dexter had an analogous thought, as she looked from Jezebel to a portrait of Jezebel's father, which hung in the dining-room and repeated the girl's features in detail, and from this to the girl again, and thence to her mother.

"And we 'd doubts of her sire!" she said to herself, with an inward chuckle: "Her sire! If we 'd doubted her dam!"

Her chuckle found outward expression. Jezebel noted it, and Mrs. Riversley.

"Nothing," she said; "my ridiculous thoughts — and bad manners."

But later she put her arm (Jezebel being absent) about her sister-in-law's shoulder, and said quickly: —

"Don't think we were n't sorry. We were, both of us. Edward was; I was. We were both of us beasts to you, and when you ran away you did no more than was right. There, don't say a word! I only want you to know."

With Weston, perhaps, Mrs. Riversley was most at her ease. She was never tired of hearing of Jezebel's childhood, and would slip away from the others to the workroom, and listen and question that she might learn to know her daughter, if it might be, by learning something of her life. With Jezebel herself she was never wholly untroubled by the sense of her lamentable shortcomings. That she had done her daughter an irreparable injury was an idea that no reasoning on the part of Jezebel could dissipate.

A dozen times Jezebel said: "If you knew how little I mind what stupid folk think!" and as many times: "I don't blame you for anything but not having understood father."

To Jezebel it was so strange not to have understood.

Mrs. Riversley said: —

"Yes, I know you think that, and I — I was so desperately afraid of him."

"Why did n't you laugh at him?" Jezebel said. "Shake your fist in his face? Snap your fingers? He would have loved you."

"Other people feared him too."

Jezebel knew. Weston had told her how some of the servants dreaded his voice. A tenant or two had trembled before him.

Jezebel kissed her mother.

"I can't understand," she said, smiling.

"Nor I," said her mother, and did not smile.

Had Jessy a heart? That was a question she would not ask even of Weston? She heard the wonderful history

afresh of the little child's conquest of her father. He "idolatralized" her, Weston said. Never was there such devotion. She believed, for her part, that Miss Jessy softened him out of knowledge. Mrs. Riversley caught at this suggestion. It seemed to hold assurance of something that she wanted to believe.

"She grieved for him?"

"Miss Jessy 's not one to show her feelings," said Weston. "She loved him dearly."

"Did she ask much about me?"

"Ask? She was always asking, my lady." (Weston could not bring herself to say ma'am to one who was his late lordship's widow and her young mistress's mother, if she was Mr. Riversley's wife.) "She was forever wanting to know where her ma was. I remember as well as well—" And then would follow some story of infantile precocity.

Some of such stories brought the upright lines of perplexity or anxiety to Mrs. Riversley's forehead. The influence of Jezebel's father, of Miss Dexter, of the strange Dormorals generally, was to be traced in more than one.

"If evil befall her!" she said to herself. She had so strong a belief in the power and powers of ill!

Weston told the tale of the ice; the tale of the hot-pot; the tale of Philip Malmsey and Anthony Mundham.

"Poor little soul," she said, "my 'eart ached for her that day. It was before that, though, that she went up to the tower to curse her enemy. Lord love her, and think of it!"

"And her father?"

"How he laughed. It 'd 'a' done your ladyship's heart good to 'a' heard him. The tree *was* struck. Nobody could deny that."

"And the boy?" Mrs. Riversley asked. "Little Lord Malmsey?"

"He 's not that any more. There was his coming of age a time back and great goings-on. She 's seen him lately, I know, but I don't know what to think. She did n't for-

get him for years, child as she was, and I've sometimes thought — Well, there's no knowing. Mr. Mundham we see at B'lone only the other day. There was small doubt how the land lay with him."

"Miss Jessy?"

"Oh, it was a meeting of friends — she's always had few friends of her own age, you see, and she thought a sight of those two young gentlemen that time — but she would n't listen to him that way, I know. I could see by his looks. He's a fine young gentleman, too, and I felt very sorry for him. No, no, my lady, if there's any one it's his lordship."

"And I've done for her there!" the poor mother said to herself, and sighed deeply.

It was, perhaps, the thought of possible complications that made her so resolute not to be seen about with her daughter. She would not drive with her nor walk with her outside the park. In vain, once more, Jezebel reasoned. People knew anyway that her mother was at Hinton Dormoral. It was no secret, nor did she wish to keep it a secret.

"People were beginning to forget," said her mother, "and the less I am seen the better. You — you don't realize how much things matter."

"I realize," Jezebel said, "how much things are supposed to matter. That is as much as I shall ever be able to realize."

Lord Dormoral might have been speaking, and Jezebel saw, as, since her mother's arrival, she had so often seen, that what she had said had caused her mother misgiving. She set herself to chase the lines from her mother's forehead. No one could withstand Jezebel repentant (she had wiles . . . but wiles . . . her school-mistresses and plagued Moulty could have told you!), and she had soon brought a smile to her mother's sad lips.

So passed the days.

But dangerous ground was skirted from time to time. It was impossible that the sight of the child who had grown up without her should not fan her sense of the injury that Lord Dormoral had done her. More than once Jezebel surprised her mother's eye wistfully fixed upon her. Mrs. Riversley was looking for any trait, physical or moral, that should proclaim her her daughter. She found none. There were moments when she shut her eyes.

Something rankled, rankled, rankled.

She hoped to get out of the house without speaking of it. What good to speak? What was done was done, to quote Miss Dexter. But a name burned on her lips. It spoke itself almost in spite of her.

It was the last day of her visit, and she had walked down with Jezebel to see Mr. Barnstaple. She made this solitary exception to the two rules she had laid down. The Rectory could be reached, as we know, or we knew, by "back" ways; and Mr. Barnstaple's office set him apart from the rest of her former acquaintance. Sunday was over — the Sunday that came in the course of the week she was spending at Hinton Dormoral, and, as she had not accompanied her daughter and sister-in-law to the service which it was their custom, whatever their views, to attend, Mr. Barnstaple at parting asked her whether she would not like to look once more at the church. His visitor, unwilling to let him see that his tact was at fault in making the proposition, assented.

Mr. Barnstaple fetched the key from his study and led the way, by the path that was bordered with yews, to the porch Mrs. Riversley remembered so well. The key grated as it turned in the lock, and a moment later Jezebel's mother was looking at the place where had been enacted the fateful scene of the February afternoon that opened our story. The light of the closing November day filled the church with shadows. At first it was difficult to see;

then, as the eye grew accustomed to the partial gloom the building seemed to grow light. The slanting pillars slanted as ever, and the brass oil lamps hung still by their chains from the beams. There was the great square pew with the red curtains that ran on rings, that jingled when you stirred them; there, the inscriptions to the memory of dead and gone Dexters, that Jezebel's mother used to read (as Jezebel in her turn often read now), when Mr. Barnstaple's sermons were prosy; and there the recumbent crusader. There was the organ, and about it the empty choir. The windows were unchanged; a crude Ascension; the Transfiguration; the Raising of Lazarus; a St. Peter; and others.

"A tablet to father is to be put up," Jezebel said — "there, under Griselda who lived so long and had so many virtues if the marble speaks true."

Her mother hardly heard her.

She was peopling the deserted pews. They filled under the eyes of her fancy. To this filling some came from the dead and played their parts in the dreadful scene. She did not know who lived of the throng that appeared at her bidding and who was dead. Lord Dormoral was dead, she knew that, or she had not been there! Never had the church been so crowded. She saw the turning of heads; Lord Dormoral's two sticks (he had gout), and her sister-in-law's strange headgear; saw the baby in its long clothes; saw her own prayer-book (she had it still), and saw Arthur Riversley whom every one in those days called Young Mr. Riversley. She could have shown by the font the exact flag on which she had stood. . . .

She left the church overwrought. The injustice that had been done to her was too great for pardon; Lord Dormoral's insult too flagrant! What though his "oddness" was acknowledged. It had brought her life to ruin. She could not forgive him — could not when a fresh insult was to be put upon her; and she spoke Mrs. Baskerville's

name. "To let you go to her!" she said. "It was like christening you over again."

Jezebel could not hear blame of her father. The moment was tense. Almost it seemed as if a serious breach must come of it.

"What do you know of her?" Jezebel said.

"I know no good of her."

"But what do you know?"

Her mother would not say.

"Some day you will know I have not spoken without reason," she said.

Both spoke with suppressed heat. So strained was the feeling upon each side that simultaneously they determined to abandon the perilous discussion.

Jezebel's mother went to her room and did not appear till the gong sounded for dinner, when her daughter saw that she had been weeping.

Remorse smote Jezebel at once. She devoted herself to her mother from whom the morrow was once more to part her. By bed-time the reconciliation seemed complete, yet Jezebel's conscience did not wholly acquit her. She fell asleep wishing for the morning that by her manner she might make further amends for the anger she knew she had shown.

She woke suddenly to find some one by her bed. The fire burned brightly, and she saw that it was her mother upon whom her startled eyes rested as she awoke. Something stirred at the back of her mind.

"You have just kissed me?"

"Yes."

"Has this happened before?"

"Before?"

"You asked me if I remembered you. Would it be possible? Wait! I — how old was I? I think I remember. Either I have dreamt it or I remember . . . some one who kissed me and cried. I was taken out of my crib.

Somebody I had never seen before held me. Was it you? Was it you, mother?"

"I came once — like a thief in the night. You were mine, even if I had forfeited you. I came at a time of great unhappiness."

## CHAPTER X

NEAR Wummut's Rock beyond Cattleford there was an enchanted wood. In the spring when the star of the primrose showed its pale flame on the banks, and the violet looked out from under the leaves in the hollows, it was a spot in which to seek fairies. Summer brought the promise of the spring to round and exquisite fulfilment, and then was the charm of the wood at its zenith; not autumn, however, nor winter itself could rob it of its magic.

In the wood near Wummut's Rock beyond Cattleford, for two of the field on a fine hunting day, was the run of the season well lost — as the world, in its time, has been lost, and accounted well lost, in the cause of causes. At Ettram Rise, on the far side of the wood from that at which they had entered it, the pair, who rode straight, as a rule, were questioning yokels. This way, said one yokel; that, said another. The man and the maid twinkled each into the eyes of the other.

"We might as well be on wheels," Jezebel said, and scanned the blank country.

"Back through the wood," Philip said.

Heaven knew how they got there — or perhaps it was Jezebel who knew; Jezebel, mischievous, testing her power! They strained their ears: not a sound! and turned in the direction whence they had come. The wood enclosed them. The mare Jezebel's groom had been riding had cast a shoe at starting, and the two were alone with the trees. Overhead through the branches the sky was blue and clear, and underfoot the leaves, that might have obscured it where the mesh of boughs was thickest, rustled as the horses picked their way through a sea of them, russet and fetlock deep. The air was soft and fra-

grant. It held a remembrance of the dead summer and a hint of what should come when the winter was past. In such an air might the note of the cuckoo have been heard or the chirping of early nestlings. Instead, a pheasant now and then broke the silence harshly.

So Philip Malmsey and Jezebel rode through the wood. When it was possible they rode abreast, and where the track narrowed one or other rode ahead, and then the one behind looked at the back of the one in front, and Indian file was filed to some purpose.

Philip sat a horse well; was in all things a Malmsey. Jezebel was at home in the saddle, and had looks wherever she was. Both had eyes to see with, for that day at least. . . .

They came to a clearing. Felled timber lay waiting the carter. The spell of the wood was upon them. They found an excuse in the accident of hunger and lunch-time combining, to delay their search for the hounds. It was good in the woods. They produced their flasks and sandwiches.

The fact that man in his primitive stages must have eaten under the roof of the heavens before ever he ate under a roof made with hands, is maybe what sets people picnicking on every available pretext, and gives to food, eaten in the open air, a charm that we all of us recognize if we affect to despise it. Never were sandwiches more excellent than those which our fine pair of hunters devoured, while the breeze fanned their faces, and the scent of the hewn trees mingled with a hundred other scents of the wood in their nostrils.

They made exchanges. It was, "Have one of mine," with them, and "Try one of these."

Mrs. Rumbold had put up a piece of cake with Jezebel's, and Philip was persuaded to eat half of it. They compared notes on the contents of their flasks. His held whiskey; hers cherry brandy.

"So I can give you a *chasse*," she said.

He laughed.

"We only want coffee," he said, and produced his cigarette case.

It was magnificent, but it was not hunting. It was more than not hunting, however. It was not war. The pair fell into intimate talk, avoiding all allusion to the breach between Warbeck and Hinton Dormoral, and the rupture between themselves, and their pulses beat quicker. Sunlight lay on the fallen trees and brought out the warm brown of the bark. Sunlight steeped two souls. I have said that the wood was enchanted. . . .

This was the first of a series of meetings that passed part of the winter for two in the world. They felt themselves set apart from the throng, though they did not again lose themselves in a wood and so miss a run that was talked of. They behaved like any other well-conducted young people in the hunting-field; but a day that year was a day for both of them, less for the sport of it than for the sight of each other. Sometimes not more than a word or two would be spoken, but Jezebel's nod was a thing that Philip found himself looking to as he rode out of Warbeck; and Jezebel, knowing that hunting meant that strange play of glances by which she and he were making up past differences (and for lost time), hoped against frost as once she had prayed, in like case, frost might last. Nothing must risk the disturbing of a period so beneficent. The winter was open. There were wonderful days in it — wonderful! . . . runs that they rode together in retrospect — he at Warbeck, she at Hinton Dormoral — and knew that they so rode.

Jezebel wore her So, Master Malmsey! expression — but softened. Jezebel happy was Jezebel patient (her mother should have waited a little!), more tender, more understanding, less unconventional even in attitude. Mrs. Prendergast's daughter, if Mrs. Prendergast had had a daughter, could not (except that no daughter of Mrs.

Prendergast would ever have hunted in mourning, or for that matter hunted at all !) have behaved with more decorum than this daughter of the late obnoxious Lord Dormoral. She did nothing to shock the provincial conscience, and much that perforce the provincial conscience approved. By no means was the whole of her time devoted to her own amusement. In the village she took many neglected doings in hand, and, playing the Lady Bountiful also, played the part modestly and with discretion. It was a good report of her that went abroad.

Hugo, arriving at Warbeck for the Fitz-Rockingham Week, thought his cousin more "human," and sought about for a reason. Was it manhood or some petticoat? His outlook seemed wider. Might the "mortalizing" influence of such women as Lady Jute, Lady Balltry, or Mrs. Baskerville, be dispensed with after all, and exemplary Philip shake himself free of Fitz-Rockingham prejudices without the preliminary of coming a mucker himself in the process? Hugo was emancipated, and could jest.

Jezebel was not Jezebel, but Mary, or one of the saints.

Philip was like to step down from his pedestal.

Lady Malmsey was wise enough to keep silence.

So matters stood.

But this was still one of life's lulls. Jezebel knew it. Philip knew it. Lady Malmsey knew it.

Meanwhile, the Hunt Ball was approaching. It was an event and a function — the neighbourhood dull, lacking great entertainers. As an institution it dated from times remote, and at it, as they grew up, the young of the part made their bow to society — even those, not seldom, with the drawing-room and a London season before them.

Jezebel, in her mourning, had no thought of going, and had seen the day approach without more than a passing wish that circumstances had made it possible for her to be of those who were. She heard talk of it, however. Houses were to fill for it, and this year, by the munificence

of a rich member of the Hunt, the band of the moment — put what name you will to it — had been engaged for the occasion. Jezebel knew the band by applauding repute, and would dance to it often enough, she supposed, in May and in June and July. She waltzed a few steps in the hall at the thought.

Miss Dexter first mooted the idea. She was full of the beauty of Jezebel just then. The visit of Pussy Riversley, affording — as it had afforded — the sight of Jezebel beside her mother, had laid stress on the fact of how thorough a Dexter Jezebel was, and her aunt, the more proud of her, wanted her seen of the county. She herself had come out at this ball. To come out at the Hunt Ball was traditional with the Dexters.

"I 've a good mind to take you," she said.

Jezebel looked at her incredulously.

"Stick my old shoulders through the top of a gown and take you."

Jezebel shook her head.

"But I 'll keep you to that next year, Aunt Dexter," she said.

Another fugitive wish that she had been able to go crossed her mind. She did not give it serious thought. Still, it would have been "nice" to be going. She had heard girls who had danced to the band talk of it. It was the band of bands for a ball. Jezebel, who loved dancing, listened. She danced well, and knew that she danced well. She was light of foot as she was supple, and she was blessed with an ear. St. Eldreds boasted a floor hung on chains. What a good time every one was going to have but herself!

Her father would have wished her to go; she knew that. In not going she bowed to convention. Well, Jezebel-Mary supposed, it was perhaps not amiss that convention and she should be on bowing terms. Little enough, or she mistook herself, would they have to do with each other in life.

The night of the ball was a week off. Jezebel was fated to hear things about it. Lady Margaret had asked her to lunch, and there the talk turned on it. There was to be a large party at Warbeck. Anthony Mundham's name was mentioned among others, and Jezebel wondered whether, if she had been going, she would have danced with her two friends as once she had skated with them. It would have been good to be going if only for that. Lady Margaret had the choosing of the music, and consulted a girl or two on the subject, with an appeal to Jezebel's taste.

She herself was for Strauss. As much Strauss as possible. Strauss was for all time.

"It's too bad that you're not comin'," she said, in parenthesis. "What was the waltz you said?"

Jezebel, smiling, shook her head, and wrote down on the back of a menu the name of a waltz or two that had occurred to her. If her father had lived he would have taken her to this ball. A thought flew to him, and she said, "Oh, Father, Father," to herself, without changing her outward expression. So she communed with him often.

The Weech girl broke in on her own thought. She was for things of the moment. She gave the names of a few and asked Jezebel, who had a pencil, if she *would n't* mind, to write them down.

"Yes, anythin' with a good swing," Lady Margaret said. "That's why I'm for Strauss. Last year the militia band gave us nothin' but the tune the old cow died of from beginnin' to end, and the ball fell as flat as a pancake, and went like a damp squib."

"Something with a kick in it," said young Hamer-Acland from Apton, warming. "Something with a kick in it. That's what we want."

"That's it," somebody backed him. "That's it. We'll have no damn squibs this year."

Lady Margaret with a nod accepted the words that had been put into her mouth.

"The Hunt Ball's goin' to eclipse itself," she said.

Jezebel, who by chance had become scribe, was battered then with the names of the dances that each person present had to suggest. She plied her pencil good-humouredly.

Lady Margaret said again:—

"You ought to be comin'—"

Every one (Lady Margaret's the lighter set) said: "Oh, do come," or "Could n't you?" and Jezebel-Cinderella shook her head once more.

Two days later she met Anthony Mundham in Uncton, whither he had ridden from Warbeck upon some business he had at the post-office. He was n't a fool, and could trust himself now. Jezebel saw at once how to take him, and did not avoid Boulogne.

"It was a good little time," he said, and Jezebel repeated, "A good little time."

"Are you down for long?" she asked him.

"Over the ball," he said, and looked at her in question.

"No," she said, "I 'm not going."

"I wish . . ." he said, and broke off.

Jezebel gave a little laugh.

"I wish too."

A sound of hoofs made them turn. It was Philip Malmsey who had been calling at one of the outlying farms, and had taken Uncton on his way back, on the chance of falling in with his guest.

"We are talking of the ball," Jezebel said, giving him her hand.

Not till afterwards did it strike her that not once had he said (nor did he say then) that he wished she was going.

## CHAPTER XI

The devil in Jezebel stirred. It was that, was it? The devil in Jezebel had slept for so long that he came to consciousness slowly. He stretched himself, yawning, and woke. It was that, was it — still?

Jezebel chose to forget she had known all along in these days of contentment that *It* had never ceased to be *That*. The thing was brought home to her in a flash as she thought of the silence of Philip.

Her determination was quickly taken. She would go to the ball and not lamely. If a party could be got together in time, Miss Dexter's half-serious proposal to take her should be put into serious practice. She telegraphed to Mrs. Baskerville (shillings and shillings!) and got an answer fully as detailed, long before night. All the pleasure in life, Mrs. Baskerville wired, and promised a girl who was staying with her to make even numbers, and three men for the two or three Jezebel suggested. "So make your arrangements," she ended, "and wire."

Jezebel worked the telegraph hard for the rest of the day. Two more messages passed between the Abbey and Hinton Dormoral before the office closed, and as many between Jezebel and the dressmaker in Dover Street to whom she sent her hurried order.

Miss Dexter concurred in all she did. She had wished Jezebel to "show up" at this ball even to having gone the length, as she said, of "offering to offer" to take her, and was glad that after all she, her aunt, would have the gratification of launching her. It was what her father would have wished.

"I know that, and you know it," Jezebel said.

It was her one moment of misgiving. It was too late,

however, to change her mind then, and she set her face resolutely towards the event.

The days intervening were busy, or seemed so to Jezebel, with whom Mrs. Buckram conferred. Mrs. Baskerville's set, Jezebel divined, asked of hospitality the last cry of luxury. Hinton Dormoral was out of the world, and doubtless in many ways half a century or so behind the times.

Jezebel found or made errands for herself to St. Eldreds, and matter for many telegrams. She was not other than usual to any appearance, but inwardly she was excited and expectant. This, when all was said, was her true "coming out," and she was making it with something of defiance.

Mrs. Baskerville arrived with a rustle, two of her men, and the girl she had promised. She was a tall woman, all over chains and jingling things, that sooner or later you wanted to examine, and the most beautiful figure imaginable. Her waist, which her hand had a way of caressing, was round and slim, but so supple as to give any suggestion of undue constraint the amused and good-tempered lie, and your eye saw its exquisite lines with a pleasure that was glowing and, of its essence, seductive. The same graciousness of line was apparent in throat and bust. When she had loosened her furs she appeared to Jezebel the most beautiful woman of thirty, at forty, she had ever seen. Her colouring was subdued rather than brilliant. She spoke somewhat slowly and in a soft voice, had long eyes, and kissed Jezebel.

It was maybe for contrast (Jezebel found herself immersed in speculations regarding her guests as she received them!) that the girl Mrs. Baskerville had brought with her was a tailor-made girl of the louder good-breeding that passed just then, who said Rather for Yes, and had nothing of softness. You could no more conceive of Miss Fortnam moved or shy or embarrassed, than you could

conceive of Miss Fortnam nonplussed. She had a frank manner, and Mrs. Baskerville, talking of her later, said that she Spoke from the Shoulder, which, whatever it meant, somehow seemed to "express" her.

Jezebel had shaken hands with the two men when Mrs. Baskerville introduced them to her, and had given them welcome. She was conscious presently of observing them. Mr. Dawlish — Mrs. Baskerville called him "Beau" with a proprietary note that did not escape her, so different was it from that of the off-hand and casual "Beau" of Miss Fortnam — was of an age that might have been anywhere between thirty and forty. In the first ten minutes of her acquaintance with him, Jezebel was in as many minds as to the nature of the impression he made on her. She thought him ugly before she thought him handsome, and then was not sure. She was disposed to resent the insolence of his name till the chance discovery that Beau was but a shortening of Beaumont sent the pendulum swinging back for her, when straightway, reconsidering her judgement, she found it, him, and his appearance, agreeable. She wondered what sort of experiences had written their inscrutable tale on his features. He looked sullen when he was silent, and had the laugh of a schoolboy. He was not, however, to be summed up at a sitting, labelled, and dismissed. Mr. Ramsay, on the other hand (he was "Ram," "Rammie," to Mrs. Baskerville and Miss Fortnam, "Curly Horns," the "Thank Offering," and much else), was of a type less perplexing. He afforded himself infinite satisfaction, and seemed accustomed to please and be pleased.

Before dinner the party was completed by the arrival of the third man, the young Duke of Alderney and Sark, nephew to our friend Mary Anne of the Channel Islands, a lad with an ingenuous manner, and the very smallest conception of his own importance.

Mrs. Baskerville had brought with her to the country

the subtle atmosphere of the town. It was not her clothes alone that spoke London and Paris. The woman herself breathed the spirit of late civilizations. The spell of it Jezebel was fain to admit. The charms and the trinkets she wore all in the same way appeared to present her. There were things embedded in crystal as a fly in amber: a tiny bit of white heather, a four-leaved shamrock, a rusty nail, a lock of hair — each without doubt with its history; there were slender bracelets that showed an initial in diamonds, or an infinitesimal watch set with jewels, or a heart, or a shrimp, or a horse-shoe. There were many strange things in shining enamels, amongst them the mystic pomegranate.

Jezebel, examining all in Mrs. Baskerville's room before dressing, had paused at the last.

"That?" Mrs. Baskerville said, with a smile. "A token; no more."

"A pomegranate," Jezebel said, as one who reads the name written under a picture.

"Yes, a pomegranate," said Mrs. Baskerville. "It was designed for me by a friend."

"An emblem?"

"Of what?"

Jezebel laughed.

"I don't know. I was wondering whether you would tell me."

Mrs. Baskerville smiled with her eyes. "When you come to me in the spring," she said, "you shall have one."

At dinner, which went with a rattle that night, Mrs. Baskerville reverted to the subject.

"Miss Dexter," she said, indicating Jezebel, and addressing the little Duke, "wants to know if my pomegranate's a badge —"

"An emblem," interpolated Jezebel.

"An emblem. Tell her, Snarkie, what it means."

The Duke gave a little explosion of laughter.

"I don't think I can," he said.

"You, then, Rammie."

"I don't think I know."

"Beau."

"I don't think I must."

Mrs. Baskerville laughed, and looked at Miss Fortnam.

"Who wears the pomegranate," said Miss Fortnam, "fears no temptation."

"I see," said Jezebel, the mischief in whom caught the spirit of the jest, and she threw a defiant thought to Philip at proper Warbeck, "I see, a talisman."

The little Duke exploded again.

"A talisman," he said, "that 's it, and that 's why Mrs. Bask has to wear it."

So, more than once, did the jest skim thin ice. The race was for laughter whatever the hazard; and Jezebel, with the sparkling eyes, if the clean heart, would not have been Jezebel if she had resisted the inducements of the merry hour. Miss Dexter, not always following the drift of the talk though she gave it a fillip herself from time to time, watched her niece take part in it with pride. Jessy looked splendid to-night in the dress that had come down from London. It was simple this dress in design, like everything Jezebel wore, and elaborate only in workmanship. It became her marvellously, and fitted her as well as if weeks and not hours had gone to its making. Mrs. Baskerville herself, in her tiara, and with the front of her body "encrusted" (the newspaper's word on the following Saturday) with diamonds, did not outshine her, but looked, as Miss Dexter readily conceded, with a glance towards the portrait of her brother, a fitting chaperon in London for the beautiful girl.

The carriages came round before dinner was over, and Miss Dexter, Mrs. Baskerville, Miss Fortnam, and Jezebel hurried away for last touches and cloaks; Miss Dexter so far lifted out of herself as to follow Jezebel to where

she held a court of admiring servants in her bedroom — for nothing on earth but to hear the chorus of praise of her! If, she thought, if, and again if Lord Dormoral only could hear!

For the ball of the year folk started early. The doors of the town hall in which it was held were barely thrown open before carriages began to roll up. A crowd formed on each side of the crimson cloth that lay under the awning, and people arriving might hear themselves recognized, and gather from comment just how or how not they chanced to be looking, and gauge from the threshold their prospects of success. Many a fair had crossed it crestfallen. Jezebel crossed it triumphantly to the sound of an audible "Oh!"

The ball-room was hung with light muslins and garlands of roses. It was a better room than is to be found in most country towns, and, resisting decoration less stridently, it looked clothed and not bare when pains had been spent on it. Roses entwined the pillars and gave them an air of pagan revelry, and festoons of roses swung between them. Where the ends of the loops met on the walls you looked to see the head of a leering Pan. There was something Bacchanalian in the design that was probably unintentional, but that was in tune with the mood of one at least who danced that night in the garlanded room.

Jezebel had flung care to the winds. The "Oh!" of the crowd in the street gave the last flick to her spirits.

The ball-room was thronged when the Hinton Dormoral party made its appearance. Heads were turned and a visible flutter ruffled the moment. Miss Dexter in an ancient black gown (her shoulders "stuck through the top of it" as she said), and wearing some beautiful pearls of old-fashioned setting, led the way, her head held high, to a place at the top of the room. She was gaunt, and as brown as a berry, but Mrs. Baskerville with her beauty and her diamonds, her wonderful gown and her air of London, did not look more innately *grande dame*. The seven persons

of the cavalcade to the top of the room made a brave show.

The commotion in the ball-room did not abate. People were telling each other that the Dexters were there. Incredulous lips said "No!" It was, "You don't mean that!" and "I tell you they are!" and "Here? at the ball?" and "Come and see." It was then "Goodness me!" and "By Gad!" Curious folk passed near, and looked furtively or openly, as their natures and the quality of their manners directed. Calculations were being made as to the exact number of the months since Lord Dormoral's death. . . .

Thus was the Hinton Dormoral party made somewhat conspicuous. The group that comprised it was a point to which eyes were attracted as steel to a magnet. You could not overlook Miss Dexter. You could not overlook Jezebel. And you certainly could not overlook Mrs. Baskerville, who did not intend that you should.

Jezebel took note of everything. She saw people nudging each other, and looked over their heads with unabashed eyes. The "Oh!" of the crowd in the street had promised her success. Success she would have, if only a *succès de scandale!* Her eyes brightened. A *succès de scandale?* Was it that she was promised? There were worse things in life. She would know what to do.

As she meditated she saw a fresh flutter at the door. The crowd about it, receiving an augmentation, bulged out further into the room, separated, and released the party from Warbeck.

## CHAPTER XII

JEZEBEL dominated the ball of the year; so much, whatever else lacked her of victory, was incontestable. The "Oh!" of the crowd in the street was not fervent for nothing. Lady Malmsey's eyebrows were powerless if her hand (at a game of skill) had not yet lost its cunning. Her "Indecent!" often repeated, together with a slippery floor, may have helped to make the point moot whether the success Jezebel enjoyed was or was not in fact such a *succès de scandale*, as, in view of her anomalous position and the circumstances of her appearance, Jezebel had half-anticipated for herself; but that she was admired, talked about, watched, run after, and paid whatever else of attention may go to the marking-out of one from the rest, was patent to every one.

Lady Malmsey's face was a study in expression that evening. Mr. Hamer-Acland of Apton, the Master, who walked up the room with her to her place, had stories to tell of the precise moment at which she had become aware of the enemy's presence. He spoke of a tightening of muscles and a sentence suspended.

"That girl!" (a short and abrupt exclamation) interrupted whatever it was she was saying of the room and its decorations; "That girl!"

She saw Jezebel first (Jezebel herself saw to that, saw that it was so, and saw that, so being, it was good), and, looking no further, looked round at her party. She might have been saying, "Who is on my side, who?" Jezebel looked her best; knew it; was strong in the knowledge. She was snow, blood, and ebony. Nature had painted her face for her, and Weston, who, having developed a passion for hair-dressing, had had lessons galore in

her zeal to excel, and was reputed an expert, had tired her head.

No one responded to the unspoken "Throw her down." Lady Malmsey was less well served than Jehu, the son of Nimshi, or possibly nobody heard. Proud Jezebel looked from her window unshaken, and the dogs had to wait for their supper. Moreover, as Lady Malmsey's eye ranged from Jezebel, over Miss Dexter, to Mrs. Baskerville with a "*That* woman!" for the last (and the ears of more, perhaps, than the amused Mr. Hamer-Acland), she must have been conscious of a seceding from her own ranks. One and another of her party knew members of the party of Miss Dexter. Hugo, who had come down at the last moment, knew Mrs. Baskerville, and of course was disloyal with a "You, Mrs. Bask!" and a tone of delighted surprise—if he eyed Mr. Dawlish a trifle askance. Then Anthony Mundham was no longer a boy to be given directions, and he flew to Jezebel with an eager "After all!" and two of Lady Malmsey's men knew one of Miss Dexter's—"the Ram"—and stopped to slap him on the back. Lady Malmsey reached her place with Mr. Hamer-Acland, what girls she had with her, and not much else in the way of retinue.

The hostile camps were almost side by side, Lady Margaret Arlington's party, which was neutral, alone dividing them. Lady Malmsey would fain have moved; but tradition had settled long since the place of honour in which Warbeck was to sit, and other seats were taken. Hinton Dormoral, in its day, had no less had its allotted position, and Miss Dexter, making for it by old habit, had found it occupied, but had been granted it without undue pressure upon the one part (rights were rights), or reluctancy upon the other. So were the camps arranged: the laughing gods might have ordered their arrangement.

But there was still Philip, whom chance or mischance (the bursting of a glove which entailed the sending out

for another pair), had delayed in the cloak-room, where he regaled himself with the cigarette he had not been able to smoke in the omnibus. He was the reserve upon whom Warbeck relied, and the prime deserter, Hinton Dormoral, it was to be supposed, was hoping to make.

Hugo and Mrs. Baskerville discussed the girl of the hour. It was Hugo's first sight of her. An Emma Hart, he said, to enchain any Greville, an Emma Hamilton to hold any Nelson. Here was Sensibility (given mimosa as an adjunct); here (the looped roses helping the fine suggestion) a Bacchante.

So in a moment did he find the right likeness for Jezebel. She was a dark Lady Hamilton, slighter.

"With such a face," he said. . . .

Mrs. Baskerville nodded.

"And such a name! Think of it. Jezebel. Exquisite. I present her in the spring. I long for the time. People shall talk of her, push to see her, fight to meet her."

"It 's for her they should fight — the men of them worthy the name."

"They 'll do that. There 'll be swords, you will see. It shall be the season of Jezebel Dexter. It is already a grief to me that I can't hope to have her for long."

Mrs. Baskerville counted her chickens. . . .

"If our young men had eyes, you would not get her at all," said Hugo, with a thought to Orderly Philip; "and her bow to her Sovereign 'd be made on her marriage. But these are odd days."

"The last? hardly. There 's still marriage—and giving in marriage."

"Our young men see visions—and pass them by."

He looked at Jezebel.

"Our old men, I grant you," said Mrs. Baskerville, smiling, "dream dreams."

Hugo laid a protestant finger on her arm.

"Forty-five," he said, "not a day more. Ten years less, shall we say, in some lights? This to me who adore you!"

Philip, meanwhile, taking his ease in the cloak-room, with his long legs stretched out, was unconscious as yet of the surprise in store for him. There was small fear (he must be forgiven for knowing this!) of his lacking such partners as he might wish for, and when the gloves he was waiting for were brought to him, he took them leisurely from their silver paper, and proceeded to put them on without haste. He sat on the fender seat, and, the night being cold, the warmth of the fire was very grateful to his broad back. Time enough to attend to his duties; and his pleasures could wait, since the moment was pleasant! He exchanged greetings with friends, told once or twice in explanatory parenthesis the story of his burst glove, saw the cloak-room gradually empty till, after the passing on of the last late arrival he knew (where all were early), there remained but a stranger or two and the attendants. While he worked the kid out of wrinkles over his fingers, he thought of the dances he must dance for his sins and as the head of his house. There was Tall Taffy; there were others of his mother's party; there were local misses and dames who must not be offended. Lucky Anthony Mundham who had only to please his own fancy!

As he dallied with his thoughts and the rays of the fire and the end of his cigarette, a note was brought to him. It was written in pencil upon a scrap of paper.

"I count upon you," it ran; "you will understand"; and bore his mother's initials.

He read it and looked up.

"Mr. Hamer-Acland, m'lord—he asked me to find you."

Philip read the words again, crumpled the note up and put it into his waistcoat pocket.

"Very well," he said, rising to his feet, and went towards the ball-room.

The dancing was then in full swing. Time was when the ball had been "opened" in state with what had been known in its day to the flippant as the Royal Quadrille. The Lord Lieutenant of the County, the High Sheriff, and all the other men of local importance, from the M. F. H. to the Mayor of St. Eldreds, had led out their apportioned partners to the dance. But the big-wigs had trodden their elderly measure to a tapping of feet on the part of their juniors who waited their turn — a tapping that grew restive and yearly more restive till, in the degenerate days upon which we have fallen, and in which ceremonial is pushed to the wall and intolerant youth is all-powerful, formality fell into disuse, and the ball was opened haphazard by Tom, Dick, or Harry, with Brown's, Jones', or Robinson's daughter, or any one else from the town.

Philip, wondering what his mother's message meant, threaded his course through the crowd that bordered the dancers to where he knew he should find her, and saw nothing on his way to explain her mysterious words. (Miss Dexter was then sitting upon one of the raised seats by the wall; Mrs. Baskerville had moved to another part of the room with Mr. Dawlish, and Jezebel had yielded to the little Duke's entreaties for her first dance and was dancing.) Mrs. Weech, who had daughters, threw him a "Late you are!" as he passed, and his delightful smile enabled him to avoid committing himself to a name on his shirt-cuff; and Mr. Hamer-Acland with a list (off the bottom of which Philip noticed a bit had been torn) stopped him for a moment to remind him that Lady Margaret Arlington fell to his lot when the time came for supper.

"Now I have told you, have n't I? I have to mark 'em or I forget."

"I 'll remember," said Philip.

"People turn up, you see, at short notice, and the supper committee never thinks of telling one, and one has

to make all sorts of alterations at the last moment. Well, you're off my mind."

He consulted his list.

"Where are the Ortolan people, I wonder? I've got to find *him*. And, by the by" (as his eye fell on the torn edge of his paper), "I've just sent you a note to the cloak-room from Lady Malmsey. You got it? That's right. Now, where do the Flemings sit? Ah, there by the window."

He moved on, and Philip reached his mother.

He saw by her face that something had happened or was happening. He was reminded vaguely of some moment in his boyhood. She was talking to Tall Taffy, but she left her abruptly as she saw him, and drew him aside.

"Philip," she said quickly, "I am going to ask something of your generosity."

He looked at her in question.

"Have you seen them?"

"Seen whom?"

"Then I'm in time, and you haven't. Those people are here — the Dexters. I can well understand your surprise. The girl's father hardly cold in his grave . . ."

"Oh, well, six or seven months."

"Barely six. The haste is indecent — indecent! There is no other word."

"One must go with the times. Excessive mourning, after all, is a relic of barbarism."

"There are lines that all right-thinking people draw. They are not even here quietly. They have filled their house for the ball. That dreadful woman that Hugo knows is with them."

"Lady Jute?"

"Mrs. Baskerville."

"Mrs. Baskerville! I am sorry for that."

His mother searched his face quickly.

"It is nothing to us who is there or who not," she said.

Philip said nothing.

"Gerry Alderney is with them, too, which I am very sorry for. I don't think it can be with the Duchess's consent. I can't believe she would wish him to stay at Hinton Dormoral."

"Boys don't consult their aunts," said Philip.

Lady Malmsey made her bid for life.

"May one hope that young men may yet be found to heed the earnest wishes of their mothers! Philip, listen to me. I've reason for disliking the Dormorals — better reason, perhaps, than even you know, and you know reason enough why I should disapprove of them. I said I was going to ask something of your generosity, but I believe your generosity will spare me the pain of having to ask."

There was that which was subtly unfair in his mother's methods. She "thought of everything." Not for nothing was he reminded of moments in his boyhood. His thoughts fled to a bedroom at Warbeck, where a vigil had once been kept and a resolution passed voting her methods unfair. He saw a boy sunk in a deep wicker-chair, and another boy scorching the seat of his trousers as he leant absently against the mantelpiece. He even heard a word or two then spoken.

His memories coloured his tone.

"I can't make any promises," he said.

"Then I am to be forced to appeal to you?"

Philip gave an impatient gesture.

"Such a small thing," said his mother. "Only not to *afficher* yourself with her by dancing with her to-night. She has taken some of my party already. Here is Eva Rhys-Wynne without a partner."

"It is such nonsense, mother."

"A small thing to ask."

"It's unreasonable."

"If you would not see your mother humiliated."

"The girl's charming."

"She seems to have thrown her spell over you, indeed."

"Your prejudice — "

"I remember things that you seem to have forgotten."

"A child's folly."

"I remember more than that. I remember my boy's love for me . . . an instance of it . . . but you must do as you like. I have said all I had to say, and I must n't keep you."

So she dismissed him. He felt like a schoolboy. He was angry, and minded to seek Jezebel out then and there. But something in his nature that was not small prevented his acting in anger. Lady Malmsey knew of this trait in him and maybe counted upon it. There was nothing ignoble in Philip.

Yet in truth he knew not what to do. Under his anger at the course his mother had taken was a small resentment against Jezebel herself, whose ill-judged appearance at this ball had placed him in his present quandary. He believed in her; believed that he appreciated her justly; believed even that he understood her in great measure, but must concede none the less that her line should have been to silence tongues and not to set them wagging. He thought nothing, less than nothing, of the conventional trammels of mourning, but not a little of the expediency of gaining, or at least forbearing to jeopardize, the good opinion of those whose opinion was worth having, and who might shy at the semblance of lightness. What were they all about at Hinton Dormoral to allow her to come — and to bring Mrs. Baskerville? Was Miss Dexter a fool? Did n't she know? He cursed her stupidity. Yet whether Jezebel chose to go out or to shut herself up till the prescribed days of dole were accomplished was no one 's affair but her own (as was also the choice of her party), and did not affect the question. He frowned savagely. What to do? Damnable to pass her by at this, her first showing in public; and boorish, flagrantly to fly in the face of his mother's appeal to him! He was in a tight place.

As he wrestled with his perplexity he saw Jezebel. Never before had the sight of her shaken him, but now as his eyes fell upon her he trembled and was moved to the very foundations of his being. She did not look towards him. He could not tell if she had seen him. She was laughing at something her partner was saying, and that she could laugh caused him who saw her laugh, and knew that he had no part in her laughter, a pang of sudden jealousy. Her eyes and her hair, her lips and her throat were picked out for him as by lime-light in the rapid glimpse he had of her, as she went by in the maze and the whirl of the dance. He followed her with his gaze, lost her, saw her, lost her, and stood scanning the dancers, as once Jezebel had scanned the skaters and looked for a face amongst faces.

Some one spoke to him: Lady Margaret. He was n't dancin'?

Looking on, he declared, for a moment.

The band was clinkin', was n't it?

All one could wish, he said — though the right answer, he felt, had been Rippin'.

Presently, after an interval of aimless talking to one and another, he saw Jezebel again. This time he was sure she had seen him, but their eyes did not meet. She was smiling. She found her partner's wit to her mind, it would seem, and . . . Good God! who was that she was dancing with? Beau Dawlish! Good Lord! Was there no one to tell her? Her hand on her partner's arm, his arm about her, became more than Philip could see without irritation and pain unendurable.

He went out of the ball-room.

Miss Dexter, her nose in the air, watched the fray. She saw people follow her niece with their eyes, point her out, talk of her. It was Jezebel's ball. What other girl in the room approached her in looks? If there was one fit to hold a candle to Jezebel, let her step forward. Not one. Lady Malmsey's young women were a plain-headed lot (this was

straining a point, to be just, for Lady Eva, at least, was accounted a beauty); and every one else was a bumpkin. Hinton Dormoral preserved its traditions. Mrs. Baskerville shone as a brilliant gem in its crown, where even Miss Portman, or Fortman, or Fortnam, or whatever her name was, with the little Duke and the other two Jack o' me Jacks, shed quite a respectable lustre.

As the hour wore towards midnight, Miss Dexter, satisfied that Jezebel's evening was filled (you had only to see the siege laid to her), stifled a yawn or two, and threw hankering thoughts to her couch. She had no thought of freedom to seek it for hours, but thought of it tenderly.

"To think," she said to Mrs. Baskerville, "that for this we should forsake the beautiful beds God has given us! You do this sort of thing seven days, I suppose, to the week?"

"At times and seasons," Mrs. Baskerville said, with a look at Mr. Ramsay, and the inclination to mirth that she experienced every time Miss Dexter spoke.

"Of your free will?"

"If one calls one's will free."

"And for pleasure?"

"From habit."

"*In*comprehensible," said Miss Dexter.

Mrs. Baskerville and Mr. Ramsay exchanged looks again, and moved out of earshot.

"The dearest thing I ever met," Mrs. Baskerville said.

"The richest."

"Hannibal in a ball-dress. Am I right?"

"Or the Iron Duke."

"Boanergesina."

"A daughter of thunder? You 've done me. The lady's expressed."

Lady Malmsey meanwhile looked for Philip, and sought him in vain. He was not here, he was not there; not dancing, nor to be seen in the group of men at the door.

Clearly he must have left the room — a move Lady Malmsey had not anticipated, and was at some pains to account for. If he had been of the type to show spleen, she would have supposed his withdrawal to mean that if he did not dance with the Dexter girl he would dance with nobody else, and the tale had been simple; but Philip was not of this kind, and the idea was inconceivable. It was not easy, however, when two or three dances had gone by and he did not appear, to find any other explanation for his conduct. The girls of her party did not hang on her hands, but that Philip's behaviour must challenge comment amongst them was unquestionable. More than once she surprised an expression of inquiry and injury in the eyes of Eva Rhys-Wynne, the chief sufferer, and felt that apologies and explanations were due to her. More than one of the tiara-ed, the salt of the ball, said: "Your son? Is he with you?" She looked towards Miss Dexter as one who would say, "You. You. You. I owe this to you!" but took comfort in the thought that Philip, at least, was respecting her wishes, and that Jezebel (whatever her hold on him), being Jezebel, and given but rope enough, sooner or later would hang herself.

## CHAPTER XIII

OLD-FASHIONED St. Eldreds provided a card-room for those who, from what reason soever, eschewed dancing. Here elderly men of the county, dragged to the ball from their firesides, played their rubber to the sound of the distant music, and here, on the night that concerns us just now, was to be found Philip, attendant on circumstance.

He had left the ball-room fuming, and with no other intention than that of quitting the ball. He had thought to go round to the "Camel and Acorn," get a trap of some sort, and go home, leaving a note to be sent to his mother, and was on his way to the cloak-room for his hat and his coat when his reluctance to leave Jezebel without a word brought him to a sudden standstill. It was impossible, acute as was the irritation the sight of her with Mr. Dawlish occasioned him, to go without speaking to her. Impossible. Not to be thought of. He had no choice but to disregard his mother's appeal. The form it had taken was indefensible, and the petition itself, as a thing unwarrantable, deserved to be unheeded. He would not go. To be sure if he went he was out of all difficulty. Jezebel could not think then that he was avoiding her, and would suppose him called away by one of the hundred chances that interpose between man and his pleasure to rob him of it. He would thus offend neither her nor his mother, whom, annoyed as he was with her, he yet shrank from offending. But there were ways of tackling the situation. There must be. He would find one. Moreover, he was not at liberty to go now: Lady Margaret, supper, Mr. Hamer-Acland! Thus my gentleman reasoned. How leave Mr. Hamer-Acland in the lurch? Already, according to his account, the pairing of the persons, whose position de-

manded such formality, had caused him some trouble. A fresh complication, sprung on him and his list, would be such a grievance as should not lightly be inflicted upon one on whom arduous duties devolved. Philip exclaimed in his appreciation of the weight of his argument, and not under his breath. Whether or not he danced with Jezebel, he must speak to her.

As he pondered, once again that evening he heard the words, "Not dancing?" addressed to him.

He looked absently at the speaker — Colonel Fleming of Ortolan — who might, for what impression Philip had of his identity for a moment or two, have been the dead Dean of St. Eldreds, the Pope, Adam, or any one else.

"I say you're not dancing."

"No," said Philip, "I'm not dancing."

"At your age," the other began.

"My leg," Philip said, on the spur of the moment, and vaguely. "I'm giving it a rest."

"Well, I'm for a whiskey and soda," said his elder, when Philip had answered, "Yes, hunting," and "Nothing to speak of," to his inevitable inquiries — "a whiskey and soda. Will you join me? I'm going up to the card-room."

The card-room! Philip wanted time. The card-room was a compromise ready to his hand. By all means, the card-room! He could determine his course, and Jezebel in the meanwhile, if she missed him, would see that at least he was dancing with nobody else. He was not sure that he cared what she thought.

In the card-room Fate took the reins from Philip's hands, as once before in the story of Philip. This time no one fell ill, and he was not sent out for a little mixed shooting. Fate took him and chained him for times and a time, to give Jezebel space to arrive at her burning conclusions.

Colonel Fleming was an inveterate whist player. To

him with young Malmsey, there entered the squires of Weech and of Flack, players both.

The cry was a rubber. The fourth hand, the proverbial fourth, was lacking unless Malmsey . . .

"No, no," said the squire of Weech (he had daughters we know), "young men can't be spared from the ball-room."

Philip emptied his glass.

"There's no want of dancers downstairs," he said.

"And *he's* sprained his leg a bit and 's not dancing," said he of Ortolan.

"If that's so," said he of Flack.

The three looked at him inquiringly.

"With all my heart," replied Philip.

The four drew their chairs to the table.

The play of one of them for the first hand or two was rather wild, and more than once brought a look of remonstrance to the face of his partner. All Philip's heart was more than, in his mood of the hour, our Philip could answer for! He dealt, the deal falling to him, to the beat of the music to which Jezebel danced, and had almost achieved a mis-deal. What was she thinking, and what? With whom was she dancing? Steady! The ten to beat. Thus he played absently.

He thought of the fight of the dogs and her courage. He thought of her as he saw her often in hunting. Things seen and things half seen came back to him, incidents, moments; a superb bit of horsemanship; a moment of horrible risk to her at a nasty place; a look in her eyes; a laugh in them. He remembered the ride through the wood . . . and she brought Mrs. Baskerville . . . danced with Beau Dawlish!

"Pardon me" (it was Colonel Fleming's voice that broke in through his reverie), "my trick — my queen."

Philip pulled himself together.

There was a little intermittent talking. One or another

of the old men made a comment on the ball — contrasting it with other balls.

"Some devilish pretty women here," Colonel Fleming said, "devilish pretty. I don't know that I ever saw a better-looking lot. That Mrs. Baskerville — "

"They tell me," said the squire of Weech, ". . . eh? what?"

"Well, they say . . . "

"Ho, ho, ho! And what 's the man's name? Dawson? Dawman? Dawlish? Ho, ho, ho!"

"He 's at Hinton Dormoral, too. And *there 's* a good-lookin' wench for you! Gad! she 's a high stepper! Have y' danced with the débutante, eh Malmsey?"

"I have n 't danced," Philip said shortly. He was minded to throw down his cards.

"A pair of sparkling eyes, eh? A spice of the devil, I would n 't mind betting. I hear the woman in the tiara — what did you call her? — Mrs. Baskerville 's to bring her out in London. What 's old Betty Dexter about?"

"Old Betty was n't too particular herself when she was young," Colonel Fleming began, with a chuckle. "Do you remember . . . What 's that?" Somebody nudged him, looking significantly at Philip. "Oh, ah, to be sure, hearts are trumps. What was I saying?"

Philip called for some matches. His cigarette had gone out. He threw it away and lighted another, cursing himself, every one, everything, under his breath. The game proceeded.

From time to time men came into the room — refugees from the dance like himself, or the idle or unoccupied and those to whom cigarette smoke was the breath of life. There was the occasional splash of soda-water from a bottle undexterously opened, and the clink of a glass. One would swallow his drink hurriedly and go; another wait for the sound of the music and relinquish his cigarette at the last with regret. On a face or two Philip read surprise

at the sight of him at the middle-aged table. Well, he himself was surprised to be there.

It was close upon supper-time when the game set him free, and half the night over! He had a misgiving when he looked at his watch. As he went down he met a messenger from Mr. Hamer-Acland on his way to the card-room, to announce to those there, who had duties allotted to them in connection with the formal procession of the dowagers to the scene of the dowagers' hour, that the doors of the supper-room were about to be opened.

There was a lull in the ball-room. The long shining boards of the floor reflected the lights and wore an air of treachery. Philip looked about him as he made his way to Lady Margaret, but did not see Jezebel. He was less sure than he had been that she would understand him as he meant her to understand, and felt that some difficulty might be before him.

Lady Margaret at supper found him preoccupied, but talked for the two of them. Small tables were an innovation that year. Chrysanthemums decked them. There were blossoms that looked like snow balls and blossoms that reminded you of poodles. Some of them came from Broom, where the hot-houses ever were generous, and Philip duly admired them — went back to them, indeed, at a pause as any of meagre talk to the weather. Lady Margaret took stock of him frankly. Her partner at the feast was hardly to be called in his usual form, and what ailed him?

Yes, for goodness' sake, she thought, let him drink some champagne! That was right. Philip emptied his tumbler. Now perhaps he would prove better company. But champagne did not loose Philip's tongue.

Other tongues were not tied. The room was full of voices. They rose and fell in waves as the conversation rolled up from the tables. Hugo Fitz-Rockingham, to Lady Malmsey's displeasure, had brought Mrs. Basker-

ville in to supper, and the exigencies of the moment sent the pair to the next table to hers. Not far off was Miss Dexter.

Lady Malmsey disapproved the small tables. They gave the room the air of a restaurant, she said, and deplored *à propos* the modern habit of lunching and dining at public hotels, where you did not know whom you were sitting near and whom not.

"And whom not," she repeated.

It was an evening spoilt.

Mrs. Baskerville and Hugo at their table did not appear to be thinking so.

"You don't know," Hugo said, "what a godsend you are. You would know . . . if you had ever stayed with my worthy relations at Warbeck."

"Your worthy young cousin," Mrs. Baskerville said, "has n't done me the honour to see or to seek me to-night."

Hugo looked towards Philip.

"I don't know what 's come to him or where he 's been all the evening," he said. "The girls of our party declare that they have n't set eyes on him."

Mrs. Baskerville smiled.

"I think I must bow to him."

Hugo's smile jumped to hers.

"Do," he said.

So when the occasion arose Mrs. Baskerville bowed.

Lady Margaret saw Philip's face brighten. His attention, straying always to Jezebel, had lingered midway once or twice at the two in the room who represented her. Miss Dexter ate her supper as one who was ready for it and had looked to it for sustenance against the fatigues of the remainder of the night. Mrs. Baskerville faced Hugo at one of the smallest tables and ate intermittently. Something in the ease and grace of her attitude made Philip think of her attitude, as long since he had conceived it, towards life. She had not a care, he supposed, in the

world. She lived for the moment, deliciously; solaced with loves, and comforted with apples. There seemed not a little to be said for a plan of life that, as exemplified in the person of the beautiful woman he was looking at, worked to all appearance so perfectly. Mrs. Baskerville had no ugly side; from the crown of her head to the sole of her foot she was lovely exceedingly.

Philip was giving her grudging admiration at the moment when her eyes met his, and she smiled and bowed. It would have been difficult, perhaps, to explain to Jezebel that she had part in his admiration of another woman; but so it was. When, looking at Mrs. Baskerville, he paid tribute, however unwillingly, to her charms, the indirect connection that she had with Jezebel, as a member of the party from Hinton Dormoral, determined his fervour. Her frank smile set him re-considering her. She was to be re-considered. He would have liked to go over to her. He wanted to talk to her, hear Jezebel's name on her lips, and speak it himself. He had fallen into silence, and becoming suddenly aware of it, touched a chrysanthemum and said, "Yes, this one 's exactly like a white poodle."

"Amazin'!" said Lady Margaret, "or is it a whale?" and asked for some grapes.

People were beginning to move and others to take their places. Miss Dexter drew on ridiculous gloves, laid a hand on the arm of her partner, and went out of the room. Lady Malmsey rose presently, and, with a nod to her son and a word to Lady Margaret, passed also. At every moment Philip expected to see Jezebel come in, and wondered to whose happy lot it would fall to bring her to supper. The thought of this other's good fortune inflamed him anew. By what means soever he could, he must put himself right in her eyes, and, burning to make explanations and know himself pardoned, he hurried his partner insidiously to the finishing of her supper and up the red stairs. Free at last! But as he reached the ball-room where a reel was in riotous

progress, and the spirit of Pan and the looped roses loosed, there ran past him some one with torn dress and tumbling hair, laughing, panting — a veritable Bacchante, flying from the mishaps of a reckless dance, and followed by her partner in its folly. Philip stopped dead. The fugitive revellers were Jezebel — a Jezebel Patte en l'Air, bound for repairs and the cover of the cloak-room — and the hated Beau Dawlish! Bystanders followed the pair with dubious looks or a shrug of the shoulder, and from a group at the door Philip caught the eye of his mother. Rage seized and possessed him. Not then could he make his peace, nor thus . . . Fate was against him.

It was nearly an hour before he saw Jezebel again. She was dancing with Anthony then, was spick and was span, with not a hair nor a riband disordered. He made for her, threading his way through the dancers. She led him a dance! . . . would not see him. He spoke to her, having run her to ground; she would not hear him, but gave him open mockery and the back of her beautiful head.

## CHAPTER XIV

Lady Malmsey had over-reached herself, and knew it that night when she looked at the face of her son. He said nothing, but that under his calmness he was not calm was clear to an eye as discerning as that of his mother. He stayed the ball out, pacified her party, and danced a few times, but his silence in the omnibus going back she held ominous. Hugo rattled in talkative mood. St. Eldreds, he said, was waking up. The ball was quite tolerably done. The garlands of roses had given the scene a saturnalian touch, which had all the charm of the unexpected. There was even a supper you could eat without the fear of death before your eyes, and you had not to mix soda-water with your champagne.

"Philip presented the wine," Lady Malmsey said in parenthesis. There was a chorus of, "Oh, that accounts," but Philip did not respond in any way.

Eva Rhys-Wynne had burning eyes in the darkness.

Philip looked out at the light on the hedges. The night was very dark, and only that could be seen which was illumined by the lamps. It was light enough to see all that he wanted to see, since his sight was turned inward. The drive home seemed very long; he was conscious of wanting to stretch himself. It was impossible to think, cramped up as he was on the one side by Hugo (and heavens, how he talked!), on the other by the skirts of he knew not which girl of the party. Now Hugo was chaffing him as to what he had done with himself all the evening. He heard himself saying he was too sleepy to defend himself, and endured an intolerable moment or two before Hugo obliged him by desisting. Irritation consumed him. He wished Eva Rhys-Wynne would not look at him so persistently.

Whenever there was light in the omnibus, as there was in the town at the starting, and when some one struck a match to see the time, and again in skirting a village, he found her eyes fixed on him. They were upon him, too, he believed, in the dark. His nerves were in very tumult, and his nature, as he had thought he knew it, was belied. He could not reason calmly. He was living again through the evening. Words spoken by Jezebel rang in his ears with the sound of the trotting hoofs on the hard road. They set themselves to the rumble of the wheels.

Physical discomfort acted and reacted upon mental. He could hardly have said whether he was suffering most from the confinement of his limbs (the omnibus was large, and space not in reality so restricted as it seemed to him in his mood of the disturbing moment), or the fact that he had to sit still under Jezebel's misconception and contempt. Beau Dawlish stuck in his mind as a bone sticks in the throat; Mrs. Baskerville too, if less painfully. He thought of the talk in the card-room; and frowned at the thought of Miss Dexter. She was not fit to have charge of Jezebel. He shifted his position impatiently.

The omnibus rolled on through the brooding country. Its lights, tracing the line of the hedges, showed the way and what way it was making. Hugo was slow to cease talking, but ceased; and one and another of the party fell into silence and marked time with the heavy breathing of uneasy sleep. Now and then a nodding head would be pulled up with a jerk into wakefulness, or a movement separate the alert from the slumbering.

Philip grew easier presently. The last change of posture had secured him more room, and as if in gratitude his mind too relaxed. In the sleeping omnibus, where yet one or two did not sleep, he might have been thought to be sleeping. As he sat motionless, his long legs stretched out and his hands clasped in front of him, something in the darkness touched the hand that was uppermost — another

hand. He stirred. There was a start, then a rustle, and a movement which became general.

"Nothing," a choked voice said; "my fan. It—it . . . Oh, I have it."

Silence settled down once again. Philip chafed. He was in no mood for tenderness, and a little sound that he heard told him that Tall Taffy was crying. Restlessness seized him anew.

He hailed the kindly lodge-gates with relief, and the easy going of the park, that announced the drive nearing its end.

Supper was spread in the dining-room. Not yet was he free. Must people eat at every hour — and "all hours"? He blessed Eva Rhys-Wynne who pleaded fatigue and hurried to bed, and he hoped the others would follow her lead. The temptations of soup (which in the cold small hours became "hot soup" for them all) proved irresistible, and soup paved the way (if one may speak of such pavement!) for dainties more solid. Half an hour passed, and the hands of the clock were at five before the party dispersed.

Philip stood at the foot of the stairs lighting candles.

His mother looked at him. She waited to the last.

"Good-night, Philip."

"Good-night, mother."

He was moving away.

"Philip."

He paused, half turning.

"I have n't thanked you."

He turned fully.

"You have nothing to thank me for."

"You did as I asked. I sha n't forget that."

"You have nothing to thank me for," he said again.

He went his way to the smoking-room, and Lady Malmsey sought a troubled couch.

Three people slept little at Warbeck that night. Lady

Malmsey who had made a false move; Tall Taffy who wanted to die; and Philip intent on amends to himself and to Jezebel. The morning allowed the solace of action to one of them. Philip's purpose was firm. At ten he was breakfasting lightly, and, not many minutes later, in the saddle and on his way to condemned Hinton Dormoral. Lady Malmsey might well be aquake!

It was a morning for the gods and the young. Birds twittered in every bush, and larks, mistaking the season, battered at the blue gate of heaven, besieging it with ecstatic wings and "invincible" melody. It was a day to ride out to your love, and to bear her away, if need be. Philip rode briskly. He was going to make Jezebel see . . .

Hinton Dormoral, in course of time, stood up above the trees. Philip drew rein to admire. He had not been within the park-gates since that day, years ago, when he had driven with Anthony Mundham to return the lost handkerchief. As he rode through the park his first doubts seized him. What if Jezebel should refuse to see him? In a trepidation that surprised him he rode up to the door. A gardener was working at hand and hurried forward to ring for him. Five minutes later a groom had taken his horse, and he was being shown into a great empty room to wait for the coming of Jezebel. He stood by the fire and was left to twiddle his thumbs. The great room of state, little used (for the size of it, probably), oppressed him. It had faded tapestries, and the tables and chairs and sofas of other days. A fire burned brightly, but Philip felt chilled.

From a distant part of the house he heard the sound of a piano, and faint laughter and voices. He recognized airs from a comic opera he had heard the year before in Paris. Some one was singing, and at the end of a verse there were shouts of merriment made thin by intervening walls. Here there should be the riotous dance that had drawn the town. She was a daring amateur who should attempt

it. Some one assuredly was dancing. He thought of the vision of Jezebel torn, flushed, dishevelled, and he frowned. A louder gust of music reached him, such as might be emitted by the opening of a door, and a chorus of applause seemed to be interrupted.

There was a brief pause, and the music proceeded. Some minutes passed; then the playing ceased, the door seemed to be open again, and there were voices in the hall.

A woman's voice — from the stairs Philip guessed — said: "What a noise you've been making," and others cried "Mrs. Bask," or "Mrs. Baskerville," or "At last!" or "The top o' the morning!" There were good-mornings spoken. "You don't know what you've missed," Philip heard, and something about the "Patatras" song. "Oh, my dear, you *must!*" came from Mrs. Baskerville. "Not now," came then in the voice for which Philip was listening. The voice set him trembling. "Not now; after lunch, if you like. We're going out. Get your hat, Mrs. Baskerville, and come with us. I shall be ready myself in five minutes!"

Five minutes! Philip heard every word. Jezebel must know that he heard. She gave him five minutes.

There was some further talk, composed of banter and retort, and the sound of dispersing; then the door opened and Jezebel came in. She came in with a laugh on her lip, but as she advanced Philip saw that the laugh was for the last person who had spoken to her — the man Dawlish it might be, or whomsoever else! — and that he had no part in calling its brightness to her face. Rather was it such a tail of a laugh as may linger in the eyes and on the mouth of one who, turning from pleasure to the execution of some task, has not wholly brought the mind to bear upon that with which it must be occupied.

Philip felt still more chilled.

"You wished to see me," Jezebel said.

She did not offer to shake hands with him. He noticed the omission and her attitude.

"I felt I must see you," he said with difficulty; and Jezebel waited.

That she could wait and say nothing became, in the moment or two that measured the silence, a thing that was enraging. She stood on the other side of the hearth from that on which he was standing. She was slightly flushed, but only from her recent exercise (she had danced; she could dance!); and a beneficent self-possession, that was admirable and strangely disconcerting, was displayed in every line of her face and form. Philip, the good speaker, the head of a house, and the model of manners as of virtues, felt abashed to mortification and the verge of inarticulateness; and for a space, brief enough in actual duration, but of a length that seemed interminable, he could lay his tongue to no words in which to express himself.

Jezebel spoke again.

"Here," she said, "we're not in public, and I suppose I may know you. You will forgive me a natural curiosity as to what brings you to Hinton Dormoral? As far as I remember no one from Warbeck has entered this house in my lifetime. Will you sit down, Lord Malmsey?"

"You make it very difficult for me to say what I have to say."

"Whatever you say is said of your own free will," said Jezebel. "There isn't, you know, the least need to say anything."

He did not sit down, nor did she. They stood as at first on each side of the hearth. The light of the fire that burned there illumined the glossy cloth of her plain black dress, and reflected itself in the leather of his riding-boots.

"If you think," Philip began stiffly, "that what happened last night can be allowed to pass without a word of explanation, you ignore what is due to me."

"I should be sorry to ignore what's due to you," Jezebel said. "I hardly see how I can do that."

She smiled as if to herself, and Philip looked at her hastily, suspecting her of laughing at him. He seemed about to speak, and did not speak for a moment. Then, "Don't you see that I can't let you think what you're thinking?" he said, in a different tone.

"If I were thinking anything!" Jezebel said.

"Every word that you say proves to me what you're thinking. I was prepared to find my offence great. It could n't seem anything else. But I ask you to believe that I was n't as—as—"

He broke off.

"Please," Jezebel said, "don't think it necessary to explain. You mistake altogether. I'm afraid you think I did n't enjoy my evening. You were on the committee, were n't you? I think you all worked splendidly. I found the ball delightful."

"I wish I could say as much. It was to me one of the most disagreeable evenings I've ever spent."

"I am sorry for that."

"You know that it was."

With the point of her shoe she pushed back a cinder that fell from the fire before she answered him, and he found himself watching her action.

"That was a pity," she said. "I was told by people who had been at other balls — I'm no judge myself — that it was very well done. The band anyway could hardly have been better."

"Was it good?" Philip said.

"It seemed good to me."

"You were dancing?"

"It was my first ball. One is supposed to dance at one's first ball — that is, of course, if any one is kind enough to ask one."

Philip looked at his boots. She was laughing at him.

"You can't suppose it was by my wish that — things were as they were."

"You could n't dance with every one," said Jezebel.

"I made a great mistake last night. I came here to tell you so. I found myself placed in a difficult position — what it was exactly I must leave you to guess. It was n't of my making. There it was, however, and it had to be dealt with as best it could. I counted a little upon your understanding . . ."

Jezebel stopped him with a gesture.

"It 's as if I were asking your reasons," she said amiably. "I don't want to know. I know, indeed, all that's necessary."

This was not the Jezebel Philip had expected to see when he rode out of Warbeck, cocksure of himself in the glorious morning air. Anger he could have brooked, but this smiling composure which could only have a foundation in indifference was having a curious effect upon him. He made a movement as if he would cross over to her, but stayed where he was, as a sudden sound of loud barking in various keys turned for a moment the current of their thoughts.

"They have let out the dogs," Jezebel said, and looked towards the window. "The deep bark is Skoal's. Your dog is n't with you?"

He shook his head.

"I did n't think of bringing him, or think of him," he said.

"That 's as well. They would have fought."

She seemed to be listening.

"Oh, they 've let out the terriers, too. I can hear. And Spot is ill and must n't be loose. Is n't that tiresome! One moment." She rang. "I must speak about it."

She talked of the dogs and "Spot's" leg, which he had wounded badly on some barbed wire, till the servant appeared and she gave her directions.

Philip watched the man out of the room in silence.

"Do you remember the day of the fight?" he said then. "It seems it is we now who are to be at variance."

"That is assuming rather much," Jezebel said.

"Oh," Philip said boyishly, advancing a step, "won't you be generous? Can't you understand?"

"But I do understand," answered Jezebel. "I understand perfectly. What was stupid of me was that I should n't have understood sooner. I understood last night what I ought to have understood always. It was good of you to take the trouble to come over this morning, but it really was n't necessary. I don't think anything that you could say could make me understand better than I do at this minute. There are things, are n't there, that one has known in a way, without knowing that one knew them, and there are moments that make such things plain to one. Did you stay very late last night? You must have been up earlier at Warbeck than we were here, but we had a longer drive." She looked towards the door. "I think I hear the others."

"Do you mean seriously," Philip asked, "that you 're going to refuse to hear me?"

"I have to go out, Lord Malmsey. Most of my party leave this afternoon — all indeed except Mrs. Baskerville — and I have to show them what there is to be seen at Hinton Dormoral."

"You send me away?" Philip said.

"What can I do? We 're going round the stables and up to the keeper's. If you care to stop I shall be very glad, and I daresay you won't come across any one who knows you."

"That 's abominable of you."

"My consideration! How dare you?"

Philip was trembling.

"You go out of your way to make sport of me," he said, in a strained voice. "I came here to ask you to forgive

me for an error of judgement which by some cursed stupidity I was led to make last night in a difficult moment. You won't hear me. You insult me —"

Jezebel's eyes sparkled.

"The insults have all been to me, or it is I who 've been making what you call an error of judgement."

"You insult me," Philip said, "in choosing to think that I meant any insult for you. You know it was n't that. You know, or you should know, that I of all men could wish you no ill. Can't you see how it is with me? Have n't you seen?"

"I hear the others," Jezebel said again.

He was stung by her manner past all enduring. He caught her hands, both hands, and drew her forcibly to him, holding them tightly. She did not shrink from him but met his eyes boldly. Unable to move, held prisoner as she was by his superior strength, she was still mistress of the situation.

Jezebel herself had not any very clear recollection afterwards of what words they were which came then from his tense lips (there were allusions to Beau Dawlish, her own good name, her aunt, Mrs. Baskerville), but she knew that she neither changed colour nor flinched. His face near to hers showed her what he was feeling, and she was a little bit ashamed of herself, sore as her heart was. She was conscious of noting small details of his appearance: the way that his hair grew back from his low smooth forehead, reminding her of a plaster cast of a Praxiteles' Athlete that stood in a passage upstairs; the shape of his mouth, something of clean finish at the corners of it; and the poise of his ears. His eyes were not quite of the colour that she had supposed them.

"Let me go, please," Jezebel said quietly at last. "I don't think I can be called upon to hear much more, and there is somebody coming."

There were sounds out in the hall. He released her as

suddenly as he had taken hold of her; nor released her a moment too soon.

Mrs. Baskerville's head appeared at the door.

"Oh, you are there," she said. "Is that Beau with you? No. Lord Malmsey? I did n't know you were here. How do you do?"

She came towards them, willowy, graceful, smiling.

"I don't disturb you?"

She looked from one to the other.

"No, we had finished our talk," Jezebel said. "Lord Malmsey had a word or two to say to me about the ball. He was on the committee, you know, and was afraid every one had n't been looked after properly. I see you 're ready. I shan't be a moment."

Philip looked at her steadfastly. Jezebel looked at her wrists, on which the marks of his hands were changing from white to red as the circulation of the blood was resumed.

"I will write to you," he said.

"Don't do that," said Jezebel from the door. "The thing's settled. There 's really no occasion to write."

She nodded and left them. They heard her sing the refrain of the "Patatras" song as she ran up the stairs.

## CHAPTER XV

PHILIP rode back to Warbeck in widely different mood from the mood in which he had set out.

Larks were still singing, and the sky was still blue, but Philip knew little of either. His mind was in a whirl. Jezebel's benign aloofness, her smiling indifference, and her extraordinary tranquillity were so many amazements that set it spinning. The sounds that had greeted his advent had primarily unsteadied it. It was she who had been singing the harum-scarum song for the delectation of Dawlish and the rest of them; it was she who had danced the unbridled dance! Perhaps his mother was right, and the girl not worth a thought. For a mile or two he rode savagely, spurred by the tumult of his nerves as in turn he put spurs to his horse. A farm labourer, seeing him, thought he had taken leave of his senses, or that his horse was bolting with him, and gave vent to bucolic "Dang me's," even climbing a gate in his wonder to see the race out. So Philip eased himself — Philip the staid and conventional.

Somewhat relieved by the violence of the exercise, he realized what he was doing, and, pulling up to a hand gallop, to a trot, to a walk, tried to recover his mental balance.

His mental balance seemed hopelessly gone. Never before had he cut such a poor figure. He went over the recent visit to Hinton Dormoral again and again, from Jezebel's entrance (and before it) to the moment of his escape from Mrs. Baskerville and the approach of the others, repeating aloud from time to time a word or two spoken by himself or by Jezebel, and hearing always the indulgent calmness of her tone, seeing always the benignant tranquillity of her attitude. Even when, losing control of himself — he, Philip

Malmsey! — he had held her hands and forced her to listen to him, neither her look nor her voice had faltered. The more he reviewed the situation, the sorrier seemed his part in it! From first to last he had been at Jezebel's mercy . . . and was now at her mercy. Did she know how completely? His horse felt the spurs again for an instant, and wondered, it may be, what ailed his young master. Did she know how completely?

Here Philip's experience of women was not of a nature to aid him. Hitherto positions had been reversed, and his unacknowledged difficulty with the sex to keep it at arm's length. Lady Jute was a case in point, Lady Balltry and others. These syrens did not attract him very seriously. Without lashing himself to the mast he had been able to steer clear of them.

So safe had he thought himself!

But now it was different. Once and for all he had fallen in love, and the more he was nettled and humiliated and tormented, the more burning became his necessity to put himself right in Jezebel's eyes and reëstablish himself in his own.

She and her party were going the round of the stables. With sharpened senses he seemed to have knowledge of all that was passing. She would show her hunters with pride. There would be a chorus of admiration for one of them (ah, the day of the ride through the wood!), and Jezebel would expatiate with affection upon his good qualities. She loved her horses and was a judge of a horse. He could see the file go from box to box, at her leading, and could hear the stable sounds they would hear: the sound of a pail on the bricks; of the washing of a carriage, suspended perhaps as they passed; of the straining at halters as heads were turned. Jezebel's slim, straight figure would be outlined against a door or the wall or the ground. He could see it so outlined, as, in the same picture, he could see Mrs. Baskerville with her hands behind her, leaning

upon her idle stick, while from her lips there came the things that trip lightly from such lips as hers to make the careless and unthinking laugh. Jezebel would laugh — whether she should or should not! There was no one to guide her, and the man Dawlish — the cursed Beau Dawlish — to laugh with her!

Small wonder our gentleman, contrite at his treatment of Jezebel as she supposed him to have treated her, stung by her treatment of him, and horribly concerned, in her interests, at the company she seemed destined to keep, was exercised as never before in a life that had offered him little resistance.

Lady Malmsey at Warbeck was spending an uneasy forenoon. Philip's expression had haunted her night, and his absence when she heard of it did not not tend to reassure her. Breakfast was a feast that spread itself over the morning. Her guests trickled down to it one by one. Eva Rhys-Wynne, the last to appear, was as white as a sheet and spoke of a headache. She had been expected to stay till the next day, but announced her wish to leave that afternoon if times and trains served. She did not feel well, she said, and would be better at home.

Lady Malmsey demurred to her travelling.

"It won't hurt me," she said. "It 's very kind of you to want to keep me, but I think I 'd rather go home. It is n't anything, you know."

Lady Malmsey, who knew pretty well what it was, felt a further misgiving connected with Philip. Not, be it said, that she desired one of Lord Merionethshire's penniless girls for a daughter-in-law, but that at this precise moment an abandonment of the game by one of the players argued a possible something amiss with the prize.

Hugo said Philip was wonderful. Even after a ball he could not take his rest out like any one else, but must be setting them all a lesson in energy.

"Where's he gone?" he said. "To some farm at the back of Godspeed, I'll be bound, to hear some tenant's imaginary grievance. That is what it is to be a pattern landowner. I have only to think of my cousin to know the meaning of the Biblical phrase, 'an ensample.'"

"I hope," Lady Malmsey said, smiling, but anxiously, "that Philip will never be anything else."

"And I hope," said Hugo, with a wink at Anthony Mundham, "that he will — for his ultimate good."

Luncheon-time brought in the wanderer.

Philip was back, but was reticent. He had been riding, he said, and though his mother saw that, in general conversation at least, he addressed her as if nothing had happened, she did not greatly take comfort from his manner. If the talk flagged at all at the luncheon-table, he showed himself preoccupied.

In truth, his thoughts were as far off as there were miles between Warbeck and Hinton Dormoral.

Anthony Mundham was leaving almost directly. Neither he nor Philip had spoken of Jezebel. The subject was delicate — difficult of approach. Both suspected what neither of them could know for certain, and what each, indeed, felt it was best to ignore. Nothing must touch their friendship.

The pair had sense of the thing unsaid at the parting. Philip had driven Anthony down to the station, and stood with him on the platform waiting for the train to come in.

"Do you remember the day you met me here for the first time?" said Anthony.

"How we ragged!" Philip said, and seemed to be going to say more, but did not.

Anthony took a few steps on the platform. He looked at his watch. The train was due, and came into sight not many minutes later.

It was just before he took his place in it that he saw Philip look at him curiously.

"What is it, old boy?"

"I may be leaving home in a day or two," Philip said quickly. "I don't know. If I wanted you for a few days in London, or a run to Paris or somewhere, could you come?"

Anthony shook his head.

"Damn you!" said Philip.

"I must even be damned," said Anthony, and explained. For the time he was tied by the leg. He was managing a branch of his father's business just then single-handed, and had to see an undertaking through. "In three weeks I'll go where you like."

"No good."

"None?"

"Not a bit."

Philip wrung his friend's hand, watched him out of sight, and drove home.

Two hours later a mounted messenger left Warbeck bearing a letter, and Philip might have been seen to be restless, impatient, and disturbed. He was seen to be all three by Lady Malmsey, who continued to observe him. The entertainment of her party fell on her hands.

Philip, seeing himself watched, excused himself on the plea of an engagement with his agent, and, going out with his dog, did not come in till some time after the dressing-gong sounded. A few minutes later his messenger returned — empty-handed! There was no answer was the answer that was brought to his room. He sent for the groom and questioned him.

"Miss Dexter herself got the letter?"

"Yes, your lordship."

"You are sure she was in?"

"The footman took the note from me, m'lord, and brought me back word that there was no answer."

"At once?"

"In a few minutes, your lordship."

The gong sounded for dinner.

"You must ride there again and wait for an answer. Stay, if you are tired send one of the others — Morton or Betley. He can ride Prince. Find Wilson, and tell him to ask her ladyship to go in to dinner without me, and then come to me for the note."

The man left him and he sat down at a writing-table, seized paper and a pen, and began to write rapidly.

The groom, making for the back-stairs, chanced to meet Lady Malmsey, and, touching his forehead with a "Beg your ladyship's pardon," took upon himself the delivering of his message.

"Very well," she said, and stood still for a moment in abstraction. He waited for her to pass on, to go back to his master's room, and seeing that he waited she said, "Yes, what is it?"

As an outdoor servant he was ill-at-ease in the house.

"Beg your ladyship's pardon," he said again. "His lordship told me to come back to him for the note."

"The note?" Lady Malmsey repeated absently.

"One of us is to ride over with it to Hinton Dormoral, my lady."

Lady Malmsey started visibly.

"Wait here," she said, and went herself to the door of Philip's room.

She knocked, and, at his "Come in," turned the handle and entered. He sat partly dressed at his table and wrote. He was in his shirt-sleeves and collarless, and what struck Lady Malmsey most, in all her agitation, was the beauty of her son's head and throat as the light of the candles fell on them. A thought at a tangent sped to poor Eva Rhys-Wynne on her journey just then back to safety; and another to others she knew of whose hearts in their season had ached for this boy of hers. Poor Eva! Better penniless she than the strange woman. Better this one or that than a daughter of Heth. She had a vision of Philip astray

at the hands of a wife of the daughters of Canaan — astray, led away, and gone whoring, in the forcible phrase of the Scriptures (the Fitz-Rockingham training and blood notwithstanding!) after false and strange gods.

Philip looked up, expecting to see the servant come back to him. He saw his mother instead. His letter half written lay open before him.

"Yes, mother?" he said, much as she a minute before had said "Yes," and "What is it?" to the groom as he stood in the passage.

There was a moment's pause. Lady Malmsey could not trust herself to speak. Something in Philip's look daunted her. She looked from his shirt in which the studs were not fastened to the letter that lay on the table; from the letter to his face, and there again met his steady question.

"The gong has sounded," she said.

"I sent you a message asking you to go in to dinner without me."

"I got it."

"I shall be down in a few minutes."

He looked at his pen and the letter, as if he would proceed with his writing.

Lady Malmsey faltered, painfully exercised. The sight of the half-written sheet was wormwood and gall to her.

"Philip —" she said, and broke off.

"Well, mother."

"You are writing. I don't know what you are writing. Don't do in haste what you may live all your life to regret."

"I am doing nothing that I shall regret."

"Philip, I beseech you —"

"Again, mother? You 'besought' me last night, and it is unlike you to ask anything of any one. I shall have something to say to you — but presently — not at this moment."

He looked at his watch, which lay on the table beside him.

"They must be waiting for dinner. Please make my excuses, and say I shall be down in a moment."

As Lady Malmsey left her son's room, he called in the groom who stood waiting outside.

## CHAPTER XVI

JEZEBEL wrote her note quickly.

"No answer," she wrote, "was an answer I thought would have sufficed to set the question at rest, but you press for an answer in writing, and I hasten to write to you. Let me say, then, that while I am deeply sensible (one is bound, after all, in conventional situations by conventional terms) of the honour you do me in asking me to marry you, I have no choice or inclination but to thank and refuse you. I do so most definitely. I do not pretend either to be indifferent to your feelings, or myself to have been wholly unconcerned at what occurred last night at the ball. If you had come to me and made however meagre an explanation of your case, I should have understood you. Now I know that I do not, and I find myself wondering whether (or how) you got leave to write to me. Your declarations and your proposal to marry me are by no means the irrefutable proof that you appear to think I shall find them of the nature of your sentiments towards me. You are piqued, and one usually so deliberate, cautious, and far-seeing, should know better than to act hastily. It is not for me, however, to admonish you. I have only to answer you, and I have done so. Ill-famed we may be as a race, but we do not go where we are not welcome. I have nothing to add except one little bit of vindictiveness. I do not propose to make scenes; we can, as far as I am concerned, exchange salutations when we meet hunting or otherwise, but I hope we may not have to speak; and (this my malice!) I should like Lady Malmsey to know, as she seems to believe in my sorceries, that I am wishing her son may fall into the toils of some one

less harmless than she is who has the misfortune or privilege here to subscribe herself

"Jezebel Dexter."

She read what she had written and smiled over it, albeit with somewhat dimmed vision. It was necessary to dry her eyes before she could see clearly to direct the envelope, and finding herself by chance without a handkerchief, she rummaged hurriedly in a drawer and took the first that came to her hand. Then having folded her letter, closed and sealed it, she gave it to Buckram to be delivered to Philip's messenger, and returned to Mrs. Baskerville.

Dinner was over long since. Miss Dexter, fatigued with the exertions of the preceding night, had retired to bed about nine with a frank tale of sleepiness and the arrears of slumber she proposed to make up. It was all very well for young persons like Mrs. Baskerville and Jessy, but *she* had her beauty to think of, and Good-night t' y' both.

Jezebel and her guest sat by the fire in the library and talked. Buckram handing his young mistress the letter had said, "From Lord Malmsey, 'm. The man 's waiting for an answer." And *à propos* Mrs. Baskerville hazarded presently that relations between the houses of Warbeck and Hinton Dormoral, whatever relations had been in the past, seemed now to be friendly.

"As friendly," Jezebel said, "as they ever will be."

Not a fibre in her heart but ached as she said it, and to her own surprise and dismay she felt that it would have relieved her to weep in the older woman's lap. She made no sign, however, of what she was feeling, and Mrs. Baskerville did not ask any questions.

The words sounded brusque perhaps as they were spoken, and Jezebel hastened to qualify them.

"To-day," she said, "has been an exceptional day altogether — quite exceptional. We don't have a ball every week down here, and people are shaken out of their usual

habits. We shall all settle down in our grooves when you are gone. I think it was so good of you to take the trouble to come all this way to be with me. I haven't half thanked you."

"My dearest!" Mrs. Baskerville said, "I loved coming to you. We all did. I wish you could have heard what Snarkie and Beau and the Ram said of you. Dinah Fortnam adored you, too, and that doesn't go for nothing. I can't say how I am looking forward to your coming to me."

"I look forward to it, too," Jezebel said, and looked into the fire.

"You'll like London. You hardly know it, I believe, yet to look at you I should say you had lived in it all your life. What is it about you? How have you managed it? What a good time we shall have!"

"I should like a good time," said Jezebel. "I think that's what I want — what I have always wanted."

"London will love you. I was saying it to Hugo Fitz-Rockingham. He called you Emma Hamilton. You must be painted — not your beautiful face, dear, your portrait. I know exactly how you must be painted."

"Looking out of a window?"

"Jezebel!"

"Or later — the dogs and my skull and the palms of my hands."

She heard the tone of bitterness in her own tone and laughed softly. Mrs. Baskerville gave a little shiver.

"Horrid," she said. "I know too many painters already who paint skulls. They say their pictures are you as they see you, and that time will prove them right. It may be so, but I ask for beauty. I want beauty everywhere. I want beauty in art and in life. People go through the world sowing ugliness, leading ugly lives, being ugly, teaching ugly doctrines, writing ugly books. The world is full of beauty. Life is a beautiful thing if you let it be

beautiful. You mean to let life be beautiful? Please mean to let life be beautiful."

"If I can," said Jezebel, smiling.

A ridiculous little thought of Mrs. Prendergast came to her, and her smile lingered round her lips for a moment or two, before the memory of the events of the past twenty-four hours asserted itself again and drove it away. Her letter was speeding to Warbeck. She had shut Philip out of her life.

"That in the main," said Mrs. Baskerville, "is what is meant by the mystic pomegranate. We who wear it mean to let life be beautiful."

"It sounds attractive," said Jezebel.

"It *is* attractive," said Mrs. Baskerville, "and, better still, it makes *one* attractive. It also keeps one young."

"I see I must wear the pomegranate," said Jezebel.

"The pomegranate will be waiting for you when you come to see me."

They sat silent for a few moments then, and Jezebel's thoughts, wandering from the Garden of Nuts, crossed the trail of the messenger riding to Warbeck, gave chase, overtook, and outrode him. She had never crossed the threshold of Philip's home, and for a second or two was at a loss which way to turn to find Philip awaiting her answer. Sounds guided her to the drawing-room. Lady Malmsey's party had not, like hers, broken up, and Philip would be doing his duty. Whatever his state of mind might be, he would not forget his social obligations. He was making himself pleasant to one or another of his guests, with lapses, she hoped, of attention. He must be disturbed. His letter spoke of suspense, it was true (one was bound, as she herself said, in conventional situations by conventional phrases), but was obviously written under stress of emotion. His thoughts wandered, she was ready to believe, as her own. He was talking perhaps to the willowy pale girl whose nickname Anthony Mundham had told her was

Tall Taffy, but he was not thinking of what he was saying. She was sure that he was not. His thoughts were with her at Hinton Dormoral, or with the letter her thoughts had outstripped.

It was not a nice letter she had written him. She thought of the opening line: the "no answer" that she said she had meant for her answer . . . and she remembered the waspish "or inclination." The "thank and refuse you" was vixenish; the "whether (or how) you got leave," a line for an angry shopgirl. It was not a nice letter. She half wished she could recall it and yet, and yet, and yet . . . if he was worth anything, if he cared really, if he had even a sense of humour!

And his offence was grievous. She could not forgive him. In one place he could know her, in another he must not be seen speaking to her. There were times and seasons. He deserved the worst that could be said of him. It was the same Philip who had ridden with her through the wood who had failed her. And Philip the man was Philip the boy. He had failed her before and she could not forgive him.

Mrs. Baskerville saw her bright eyes.

"May I buy?" she said, and sought amongst her charms; "I have a silver penny."

"My thoughts? They 're not worth it. I 'm not sure that I know what I was thinking."

"Whatever your thoughts were," Mrs. Baskerville said, "they made your eyes shine. The receipt would be cheap at a penny."

"I think I was thinking that the future at least was before me."

Mrs. Baskerville laughed.

"At least!" she said, "dear one, at your age . . ."

"Well, without that, then," said Jezebel, smiling. "The past belongs to me; the present belongs to every one; I suppose I was claiming the future."

"I would give something for the prospect of a future as rosy as yours will be," Mrs. Baskerville said. "For myself I approach a time when I shall have to be content with the present. I live, for all that, and We Live."

When eleven o'clock struck and bed was mooted, there happened what seemed at the moment of trifling importance. Indirectly, however, certain issues were involved. A servant had brought in a tantalus and a couple of syphons half an hour before. Mrs. Baskerville had refused anything to drink, but now changed her mind, and, saying that she would have some soda-water, went to the table to help herself. The syphon was stiff, and working suddenly with a hiss and a rush, sent a wave of sparkling water splashing over her dress.

"To the skin," she said, laughing, in answer to Jezebel's inquiries, and began to mop herself up with the scrap of lace that served her for a handkerchief.

"Here, take mine," said Jezebel, throwing her what was, at all events, more substantial, and, ringing the bell, ran from the room for a cloth.

She returned in a moment with Buckram and a napkin, and the damage Mrs. Baskerville had done to herself was soon repaired.

"It won't matter," Mrs. Baskerville said. "It was plain soda-water, happily. And anyway this is an old rag. May I have my glass now? No, there 's quite enough left in it. I scarcely want any. Thank you. Now I am ready."

Jezebel accompanied her to the door of her room, where she lingered a moment or two.

"I shall miss you so much. Are you sure you can't stop with me over to-morrow?"

"I can't, dearest, possibly. I have a dinner-party to-morrow night, and, besides, there 's my husband. He wears the pomegranate, too, you see, and heaven knows what goes on when I 'm away from the Abbey."

"Men wear it?"

"Any one worthy."

"Husbands?"

"Husbands, if they're to be trusted."

"Well, I wish you could stay," Jezebel said, and received her kiss.

"I wish I could. I shall soon have you with me in London. Good-night, dear. Sleep well."

The exhortation seemed like to be futile. Alone, Jezebel was torn and lashed with the thought of Philip. By her own act she had sent him away from her. She lay in the darkness, and suffered her chastisement with what fortitude was left to her, and something of amusement as well. She marvelled in her torture at the strength that had enabled her to repulse him. She trembled at the thought of his hands on her hands, of her body held close to his body, and the thought of his passionate utterance. She had not trembled then, nor felt deeply at all. She could be proud of her strength, but it passed her comprehension. She turned from side to side, impatient of a pain that was new to her, and heard twelve strike, and one. The Castle was full of night sounds: creakings, tappings, groanings, which she did not remember to have heard ever before. They did not alarm her. The mouse in the wainscot was busy, but busier the rodent at her heart; and how should a twig on the window-pane frighten her, or the settling of a board in the floor, when her courage had enabled her to hear her lover unmoved?

When she fell into slumber she knew not. The day was well aired when she woke.

Mrs. Baskerville came down to breakfast booted and spurred. In other words she wore her hat and her travelling dress, and looking fresh and brilliant and lavishly "appointed," she yet had the compact and ready, aye ready air of one about to start on a journey.

Jezebel was just before her, and greeted her with a comprehensive glance of admiration.

"I clamour for time when I have to catch trains," Mrs. Baskerville said, in answer to unspoken comments. "Five minutes at a station, instead of as many seconds, will save you wrinkles innumerable, and fussing takes years off your life. So, Jezebel dear, give me time, I implore you."

"Eat," Jezebel said. "You've an hour before you need start. Eat in peace."

She laughed softly, and kissed her. She was better. The outlook was brighter by daylight. Not any one being could blot out the sun for you permanently when your life was beginning. London was always before her.

The talk turned on plans.

"I go up in May," Mrs. Baskerville said. "You must be ready to come to me then. The Lent Drawing-Rooms are horrid — all goose skin and blue noses — so I propose to present you in May."

"In May," said Jezebel, "I shall be there."

"By the bye," Mrs. Baskerville said, a few minutes later, and broke off.

In the carriage she finished her sentence.

"By the bye," she said, "I have your handkerchief — the one you lent me last night. Do you always use men's — what the shops call 'gentleman's' size?"

"Gentleman's size?"

"By example!"

Mrs. Baskerville spread out the creased square of cambric.

"Was that what I lent you?" said Jezebel.

"No less."

Jezebel saw the embroidered initial, and, revolving things quickly in her mind, saw what had happened. She had taken from the drawer, in the dusk and her haste, the handkerchief the history of which she proceeded to tell.

"The funny part is," Mrs. Baskerville said, "that I worked that initial."

"*You* worked it?"

"With my own white hands, as the books have it — my delicate fingers. And I must say, now that I see it again, it is beautifully done. Is n't it beautifully done, Jezebel? Look at the beautiful stitches."

"Then you know whose it is?"

"You do not?"

"Whose is it?"

Mrs. Baskerville was contemplating her work with amused eyes.

"I embroidered half a dozen of them," she said. "I remember. To think of my having the patience! If you look at this carefully you will find the pomegranate in the heart of the letter."

"Tell me," said Jezebel.

Mrs. Baskerville shook her head.

"One thinks the world large till one learns it is small," she said, and chuckled as over a joke that was rich. "I am wondering whether I can call this Bread on the Waters?"

"They were mineral waters," said Jezebel.

"And it has n't, properly speaking, come back to me," said Mrs. Baskerville, reflecting. "Take it; it 's yours. The sixth! Where, I wonder, are the other five? Gone the way, I suppose, of last year's roses and snows. This *is* funny, though, Jezebel, if you knew; and I 'm not going to tell you. My patient handiwork! He gives it away to the first pretty stranger he meets!"

"You won't scold him," said Jezebel smiling. "It was reparation. He had hurt me. I carried the scar for a fortnight."

"You shall meet him," said Mrs. Baskerville. "You must certainly meet him."

## CHAPTER XVII

To Lady Malmsey, after the scene in her son's bedroom before dinner, and a later scene in her own in which Jezebel's letter took part as a property, it was no surprise to learn the next morning that Philip was going away. Surprise, nay, amazement she was feeling, but not at the going of Philip. That he should be allowed to go was astounding, and threatened to shake many settled conclusions; but that he should go, being allowed to go, was no more than she would have expected.

So strained had the relations been at the last interview that she thought it best not to see him in the morning, and, breakfasting in her room, kept to her own apartments till he had gone.

His going was the best thing that could have happened. Away, he would come to the senses of which his feelings appeared to have robbed him. A spell, indeed, had been cast on him, and the Philip of yesterday was not Philip at all. Conceive—pale, angry, resolute, he had demanded that Warbeck should call upon Hinton Dormoral! She flushed still at the recollection. Nothing would induce her, nothing would ever induce her, to call on the Dexters. He might put the thought out of his mind once for all.

She saw him drive away, and, displeased as she was, harassed and agitated, felt proud of him and suffered her heart, for as long as the dog-cart was in sight, to go out to him. He was the worthy son of a great house. He looked back at the turn in the drive and waved his whip to whomever it might be who stood in the porch to see the last of him. She, his mother, had not kissed him or wished him good-bye.

Well, for a time he was out of harm's way. That, at all

events, was left to be said, to balance her very real discomfiture. Alas, that such safety could not in the nature of things be expected to be permanent. What would happen when he came back she dreaded to think, and took refuge in the sufficiency of the evil of the day.

The evil of the day was sufficient in truth!

Hugo was somewhat aggrieved by Philip's erratic behaviour.

"With the house full of people," he complained, "to be flying off like this — to say nothing of his absence yesterday and at the ball itself! What's come to the boy?"

Lady Malmsey admitted that the ways of young men were a thought unaccountable.

"What is to be done to amuse your guests?"

"We must do what we can," Lady Malmsey said. "They all go to-morrow, thank goodness. We must make the best of it and take them out driving. After all, they are girls and boys. There is no one that matters."

Hugo wondered why he had come (for a ball — at his age!), and why, having come, he had not followed Tall Taffy's example, and Anthony Mundham's. He was not even in Warbeck's debt for a visit. Had he not done the Fitz-Rockingham Week not so many weeks back?

The day was got through with the aid of its meals. Lady Margaret drove over to tea. She had just seen the last of her party depart and wanted cheerin', she said. Mrs. Prendergast likewise had called and was present. Talk turned on the ball. Lady Malmsey was inclined to be silent. All mention and thought of the ball was distasteful to her. Jezebel Dexter's name was spoken — of malice prepense, she suspected — and she allowed the discussion to play round it unchecked; showing her disapprobation only by a marked and a costly abstaining from comment.

"The palm of the evenin'," Lady Margaret said, "seems pretty generally to have been accorded to her."

Lady Malmsey heard a chorus of appreciations of Jezebel.

Mrs. Prendergast said, "Er, was n't there — something about a tumble and her hair coming down?"

Lady Margaret pooh-pooh'd her. Any one, she said, might take a toss. The floor was like ice, and every one knew what a reel was.

"People seem to be talking, however," Mrs. Prendergast said.

"Of course," Lady Margaret said, "people are talkin'. They 're sayin' her aunt ought to have known better than to let her make up a party and go to a public ball so soon, and lots else, I daresay; but for my part I confess I don't see much harm in her goin', or use, if she wanted to go, in her keepin' away."

Hugo, who held the country benighted, said, "*How* long is it since Lord Dormoral died? It was some time in the summer, was n't it?" and smiled at the idea that the summer, from the point of view of the winter, could be looked upon as recent in any light whatsoever.

Lady Malmsey broke her exasperated silence to say that many things were done in London, she believed, that, thank goodness, did not yet obtain in that county.

"I cannot but think," Mrs. Prendergast felt encouraged to say, "that it would have shown a greater delicacy, so to speak, to have waited a year."

"I agree with you," said Lady Malmsey.

Mrs. Prendergast looked gratified.

"So do I," she said.

You could n't argue, Hugo said, under his breath to the nearest "intelligent," with a woman who agreed with herself; but pricked up his ears at a mention of Mrs. Baskerville.

"I 've heard of *her*," Mrs. Prendergast said.

"I 'm afraid we have all heard of Mrs. Baskerville," said Lady Malmsey.

"Well, I have the honour to know Mrs. Baskerville,"

said Hugo, "and she is as charming as she is good-looking. That 's saying something, eh, Lady Margaret?"

"It 's sayin' a good deal."

"Of some one about whom it 's the less said the better," said Lady Malmsey. She could be silent, but there were limits to her endurance. "I speak from your own showing, Hugo. If half what you yourself have told me is true —"

"Oh, one talks," Hugo said. "Who that talks does n't talk? and who is n't talked about? A woman 's not a success nowadays if her name is n't on every one's lips. There are stories. Of course there are stories. Capital some of 'em. What I have told you no one knows better than the good lady herself, or gets more amusement out of. Mrs. Bask is immense. To know Mrs. Baskerville is a liberal — I might say (as her tenets are as old as the world) a conservative — education for any one. I hold myself fortunate in this assembly."

But Hugo was getting a whit out of hand — with a wit out of place. Lady Malmsey remembered her "That will do, Hugo" of a former occasion also connected with Mrs. Baskerville, and changed the topic abruptly.

She could hardly have said why the conversation made her so uncomfortable. Afterwards she looked upon her disquietude as prophetic. She wanted to forget Mrs. Baskerville's name and existence even more than the name and the existence of the obnoxious Jezebel herself. It was not to be, however, just then.

Before leaving Lady Margaret went back to the subject as a dog to a bone — to use a simile more polite, if less pregnant, than that of St. Peter. Lady Margaret was "stupid" we know.

"*She* left this morning," she said. "I met Jessy Dexter in Uncton. She had just seen her off."

"This morning?" said Hugo.

"Most people seem to have left yesterday," said Mrs.

Prendergast. "The platform at St. Eldreds was crowded. I happened to walk down to speak about a paper — the 'Spectator' — which had n't been sent to me, and really our little quiet country station was a sight to see."

"The rest of the Hinton Dormoral party left yesterday," said Lady Margaret. "But Mrs. Baskerville stayed till to-day. We were talkin' of her appearance, and I hear she looks even better by day than by candle-light. Such a test for a woman! I confess I can believe she 's a most fascinatin' person. If you 've never seen her, Mrs. Prendergast, it 's a pity you were n't at the station this mornin' to catch a glimpse of her as she passed through from Uncton."

"Oh, I don't make a practice of watching the trains," Mrs. Prendergast hastened to say.

"Mrs. Prendergast," Hugo said, "is only a spectator when, for whatever reason, there *is* no 'Spectator.' Is n't that it? And the sight of the lady perhaps was n't wasted. If she went by the eleven something from Uncton, Philip must have joined her train at Warbeck."

"*Must* you go?" Lady Malmsey said to Lady Margaret, who was standing. She rose as she spoke. "Are you driving your cobs? They are round? Then we must n't press you to stay. I have to take such care of my ponies. I know what it is to keep horses waiting."

Mrs. Prendergast asked for her carriage soon after, and Lady Malmsey disappeared to her rooms.

Alone, she gave a gesture of impatience and distaste for the rulings of the moment. Upon what odious days had she fallen! People, circumstances, the very powers that be, seemed to have conspired together to annoy her. Her son had demanded the impossible of her, and, almost as if his demand were a part of some horrible terms he saw fit to dictate, had withdrawn himself from her. Then tiresome people said tiresome things and filled her mind with horrid suggestions. She shut the door upon herself,

and did not emerge from her rooms till the gong sounded for dinner.

Dinner went creditably. Hugo might be out of humour between whiles, but years of dining-out had made him too sincere an artist in epicurism (the Warbeck cook, a newcomer, if not *cordon bleu*, being something not wholly less admirable), now to let any spleen ever interfere with the legitimate pleasures of the table. He may have chafed through the day at the burden thrust upon him by Philip's unaccountable behaviour, but once in his chair, though that chair found itself at the foot of the board, he threw captiousness to the winds, and Lady Malmsey had reason to be grateful to him. He did not encourage the conversation when it was general to hang about the ball, to which in the nature of things it had a tendency to revert. Possibly he gathered something of his cousin's case, and felt that she had been exercised enough for a day.

The morning brought no letter from Philip. He had left no address, had hinted at London, where he had rooms more or less permanently in Duke Street, and said he would write. He had taken his man with him, and luggage for an indefinite period. Upon so much must conjectures be based. His mother would fain have known what was in his mind. She was possessed by vague anxieties.

The day was made up of departures. Hugo was ready to start, when a telegram, telling of illness in the house to which he had been going, obliged him to alter his plans. He fumed and accepted the inevitable.

"I must ask your hospitality for a day or two longer," he said to his cousin.

"For as long as you like," Lady Malmsey said — "for as long as you can stand a dull house."

Hugo did not say that he knew Warbeck of old, and liked it better empty than full. He had his own books and papers, and could always amuse himself if he was not expected to amuse any one else. He could put in the inside

of a week with the aid of a parcel of volumes that had reached him that morning from Paris. By that time he would be due at the next of the country-houses at which he was expected.

Thus it came about that Hugo was present when Philip's letter arrived. It did not come that day nor the next nor the next.

Lady Malmsey looked up from the small sheet of note-paper, and, looking back to read the address which was stamped at the top of it, asked who lived at the Abbey, Pole Abingdon, Horton-cum-Dainton.

"Mrs. Baskerville," answered her cousin.

## CHAPTER XVIII

Mrs. Baskerville's idea of a journey in winter was made up of rugs and a foot-warmer, half the contents of a book-stall, people to carry things, and, at some point or other, a luncheon or tea basket. In summer, of course, you dispensed with the rugs and the foot-warmer. The rest was essential — especially some one to carry things, and Mrs. Baskerville seldom had occasion to travel alone.

By waiting a day at Jezebel's entreaty, she may have avoided a crowd, but she had lost her companions — even to Beau Dawlish, the man of the moment, whom an engagement had carried up north.

The compartment in which Jezebel had ensconced her (her maid in the next) was empty, and her journey, if comfortable, — she had her rugs and her books and her foot-warmer, — was like to be dull. So she thought at Ettram, where empty platforms met her eye; so at Cattleford, where farmers got into the train or got out of it. At Warbeck there was Philip Malmsey.

A restless night had left Philip calm but unsettled, except in a determination to separate himself for a time from his home and the things of his home. Jezebel's letter had stung him, as the writer had meant it to sting him, and rage and desire and love had rent him through the hours of darkness. He had slept only to dream of a struggle with Jezebel, in which, the scene by the hearth in the drawing-room at Hinton Dormoral, perhaps, influencing the direction of the imaginations of his brain, but in no way controlling them, Jezebel, endowed with a physical strength equal to his own, wrestled with him doggedly, and resisted his utmost endeavour to throw her. In his dream she was sometimes a boy with limbs lithe as his,

sometimes a beautiful fury, sometimes Jezebel as he knew her, but always invincible. Sometimes he strove with her, as you may fight whom you hate; sometimes for desire of her he was seeking to overcome her; sometimes it was as if one part of him did battle with another. He woke straining his muscles. As they relaxed, he emerged from the paroxysm of acute feeling, which had lasted through sleep from waking to waking. The way out was the way in. The way to the heart of a woman was to leave her.

The conclusion agreed with his inclinations. Making every allowance for his mother, to whom he was deeply attached, he could not just then meet her calmly. The recollection of the stress and the tension of nerves, under which they had parted the night before, made a separation advisable, if not imperative. He slept little more, and, waking early from the slumber that finished the night for him, waited impatiently for the hour to come when his servant would be stirring, that he might ring for him and give him his orders.

He had no definite plans. All he wanted to do was to shake off the dust of Warbeck from his feet for a space. He made what apologies came to his tongue, and met Hugo's somewhat remonstrant air with blindness. It was a relief to him that his mother did not put in an appearance at breakfast, or make any attempt to see him. He understood her motives in not so doing, and finding them akin to those which prevented his seeking her himself, he approved and respected them. He had no thought, however, of bending his will to hers in this matter, if he learnt by his absence that his will was fixed and his passion for Jezebel as sincere as he believed it.

He reached the station without having finally decided on any plans. He supposed he should go up to Duke Street, and said London when his servant asked him where he should book to. London would give him time to look about him and think. There were of course plenty of houses

at which he had only to propose himself to be received as a welcome guest, but he shrank from the thought of any that occurred to him. Anthony Mundham was the only person he wanted to be with, and Anthony Mundham, by the perversity of circumstances, was unavailable. It had better be London. There were ways of getting through time and away from yourself in London.

The train came in. A lady, intent, it would seem, on calling the attention of the newspaper boy, leant from a window, and Philip, looking to see who wore so smart an air, recognized Mrs. Baskerville. The paper boy was at the far end of the platform engaged in the interesting occupation of watching a porter move milk-cans. The slowing train bore Mrs. Baskerville towards Philip. He found himself speculating, as one watching a mechanical game of chance, *Petits Chevaux* for example, whether or not she would be carried past where he was standing. The train brought her to a standstill almost in front of him. She nodded and smiled.

Philip, who was not glad to see her, shook hands with her, intending to pass on. His sentiments towards her had undergone change again. She was one of the pitfalls in Jezebel's path; one of the snares from which he had purposed to save her.

The sun shone upon her, and chose her eyes and her teeth for approving comment.

"Are you going away?"

"Up to town. You want a paper?"

The guard and obsequious porters waited on Philip, and the newspaper boy was called and rated. Mrs. Baskerville smiled Philip her thanks. Philip's servant, with his rug and papers, stood waiting. It was then that the guard, misinterpreting the situation — he so often turned keys to his profit — precipitated matters by opening the door of the compartment at which Philip was standing. Philip demurred. Mrs Baskerville smiled.

"Compromise," she said. "It is a corridor carriage. When you are tired of me you can go your way and smoke."

Thus did Philip against his will, rather than otherwise, find himself *tête-à-tête* with the dangerous lady. His disapproval of her coloured the first half-hour of their companionship. She stood for the symbol of what his Fitz-Rockingham training had taught him to avoid and distrust. So shaken, however, was the world under his feet by the events of the last couple of days, that he was ready perhaps to look to new worlds for his foothold. Little by little he unbent. He did not seek another compartment.

His mood was such that while he deplored Jezebel's association with Mrs. Baskerville, the fact of it gave Mrs. Baskerville a borrowed attraction. He was angry with Jezebel . . . nor sure in what direction his anger with her might send him . . . but she held him, and Mrs. Baskerville came from her, had but just parted with her! He looked into eyes that but a short while since had held her reflection; looked at lips that had lately spoken to her, and that Jezebel must have watched as he was now watching.

You had to watch Mrs. Baskerville's lips. They were curved, red, and flexible, and not by any means the least part of her claim to the notable beauty that none could deny her. Philip watched her lips for Jezebel for a long time before he watched them for herself. Under what he said his thoughts worked busily. His mind seemed acutely alert, and his restless night to have left him, instead of worn out, preternaturally awake.

Jezebel's friend . . . Mrs. Baskerville, too, was under the ban of his mother's disapprobation . . . another link to bind her to Jezebel. He looked on her kindly, and she looked kindly on him.

Maybe she knew. She had more experience of life than

ever would have been gathered from her lips of a child. She talked about Jezebel.

The carriage was strewn with books and papers. There was little reading done. They turned over pages from time to time. It was "Look at this" between whiles, and "Listen" (to a paragraph read), and "Let us change."

"She's like nobody else," Mrs. Baskerville said; and Philip repeating "Like nobody else," to himself, added, "No. Is she?"

"What are you going to do in town?" asked Mrs. Baskerville.

"I wish you could tell me."

"I thought —"

Her eyebrows questioned him.

"Oh, I have some business, of course."

"After that?"

"I don't know."

"She comes to me in the spring," Mrs. Baskerville said.

She always went back to Jezebel. People maligned Mrs. Baskerville's type. Its heart was of gold.

"In the spring?" Philip said.

"In the spring. She is like the spring herself. It must be gorgeous to have summer before you — the promise for the fulfilment . . . or the other thing."

Philip flowered into compliment.

"The fulfilment may hold the promise renewed. The most satisfactory sort of promise is an assurance, isn't it?"

"You mean something pretty, I know, and comforting," said Mrs. Baskerville. "I accept the intention, and return to my envy of Jezebel."

Philip reconsidered his judgements, nineteen to the dozen.

The luncheon-basket appeared at a place midway. The thought was Philip's. Paxton, his servant, coming to his carriage at the last stop, had been told to wire on for it.

The friendship was to be cemented in cold chicken and

Perrier Jouet. Two and two came the napkins, the glasses, the plates, and the knives and the forks from the basket. Philip unpacked with rising spirits.

"That's for you," he said, and "that's for me"; and they laughed over the picnic. He had not thought to laugh so soon. He had not thought to meet Mrs. Baskerville.

There was sun in the day. When they looked out of the windows they saw birds fly gaily. Some cows in a field, frightened by the train, cantered ungainly. Mrs. Baskerville said they reminded her of people she should never meet.

"And your business in London," she said, "is it urgent?"

Less urgent, he might have told her, than it had been. He said, "Oh, moderately urgent," however, and, meeting her eyes, was constrained to smile.

"Why?" she asked him.

"Why what?"

"Do you smile?"

But he did not know, and said so.

"It could wait?"

"What cannot wait?"

"One," said Mrs. Baskerville. "The impersonal 'one' that's so personal."

They were nearing London. It was now three o'clock. Houses and streets began to take the place of fields and woods and lanes. Factory chimneys pointed the distances, and ugly church spires.

"How horrid it is at the outskirts," she said. "If your affairs are not urgent, why not come on with me to Pole Abingdon? We have two or three people coming to us to-day. My husband will be delighted to see you. He knew your father, I think. We would try to amuse you, — but I promise you shan't be mapped out. You can go when you please. There are plenty of telegraph forms if we bore you."

Philip considered.

"Shall I?" he said.

"Do." She waited a moment, and added, "That's settled."

The engine put on speed, and the train rushed through stations, the names of which it was difficult to read. There was now a network of lines, and momentarily the town thickened.

"We have to get over to Euston," Mrs. Baskerville said. "Our train goes at twenty minutes past four. We have plenty of time."

They reached London, and Paxton was given his orders and made known to Mrs. Baskerville's maid, with whom and the luggage he was to follow to the North-Western terminus, and with whom, on the way (Mrs. Baskerville's maid being usually held an enlightened, humorous, and interesting companion), he doubtless joined in many amusing pleasantries upon the ways of ladies and gentlemen generally.

So did our Tannhäuser find his way to the Venus Mountain, or walk in what Jezebel, at far-away Hinton Dormoral, called the Garden of Nuts. It was not very different from any other really well-appointed mountain; and as a garden (to adopt Jezebel's simile), it only differed from other gardens by being sunnier, airier, brighter, holding richer fruit, and more exquisite flowers. The fruits had no canker that he who looked at them but knew nothing of gardens of nuts or pomegranates could see, and no worm that he wot of ate at the heart of the flowers. The light and the air did indeed, perhaps, surprise him, for given what he found, albeit ignorant of the symbols we borrow from Jezebel, he would yet have expected the heavy atmosphere in which exotics are grown. There was nothing of the sort. The homeliest cottage plot was not breezier, nor scented the air with a healthier fragrance. You might live 'mid pleasures and palaces, it seemed, and still find

the birds sing gaily and come — or sing gaily in spite of their readiness to come — at your call.

The world was a strange enough place.

The few days he had come for spread to a week. Mrs. Baskerville, like the schoolboy's definition of lying lips, was "a very present help in time of trouble." The week spread to a fortnight; Philip was induced to appear in some tableaux; the fortnight passed, there was always something to stay for, and grew towards three weeks. In the end, at a change of mood, he left somewhat abruptly, and claiming Anthony Mundham, who by then was at liberty, caught him and carried him south.

## CHAPTER XIX

It was looked for that after the public emerging from mourning Hinton Dormoral should throw open its gates and enroll itself among the few houses that did any entertaining. The county, which in some sort was scandalized, was also agog for developments. The decencies had been outraged, but ball-givers were few, and a ball was the least with which the Dexters could follow up the coming-out of St. Eldreds.

When, however, Hinton Dormoral gave no sign of contemplating any such thing, it was said that the false step which had been made was acknowledged and regretted; that Hinton Dormoral, hoping to retrieve lost ground, had decided to lie low and bide its time with what grace it could call to its gracing; and that really there was — well, something to get over! There were limits . . .

Jezebel did indeed lie low, but not for the motives with which she was credited. She regretted nothing, and was to be seen hunting, though less regularly, or driving about in her dog-cart with the red wheels, and looking to all appearances as usual.

She cared little for what was or was not being said . . . but was alert for small happenings. She was waiting the course of events, and there seemed like to be no events. Philip had left Warbeck, so much the local paper told her, misleading her, itself misinformed, with "left Warbeck for London." Mrs. Baskerville might have enlightened her, but, writing, was discreet and obscure; spoke of heaps to talk over with her when they met (Jezebel must come to her for a race week in March . . . must — but must, did she hear?) and was mysterious about the Handkerchief — dwelling on the Handkerchief for security, as Jezebel per-

ceived later — and making but passing allusion to Someone-else whom she did not name at all, and behind whose namelessness it would never occur to her correspondent to suspect the person of Philip. "You will be amused," was a prudent line. . . . So Jezebel learnt nothing from her, and Philip himself did not write. Philip write? The last thing, Jezebel told herself, any one wished or expected; and watched all the posts. She was n't less nettled nor growing less nettled, but, humour helping her, tossed her head rather than set her teeth in these days, and waited — just waited.

Miss Dexter saw nothing of any distemper. There was indeed nothing to see, and Jezebel, whatever her case, was sufficiently unlike the maid as we all of us know her who attempts (or more commonly does not attempt) "from love's sickness to fly." She had control of herself; did not pine nor let her looks suffer; was normal to all appearance, retaining a hearty contempt for hysteria. She had seen hysteria at school: abstinences from food, faintings, humours, perversions. Anger played the major part in her emotions — anger tempered, as the days passed, with curiosity. What in the name of patience (and impatience and exasperation too) was Philip doing? Had he really taken his answer? It was given with a directness uncompromising enough, to be sure; but had he really and truly taken it? Was he such a fool? Was he? and was he? She stood still and asked Skoal, who saw much at this time of his mistress. She took him for walks — and once to the scene of the fight. Was he, Skoal? Enemy Peter's big, long, orderly master? Could he indeed be so void of understanding? Then where was he?

A fortnight was gone when there happened what Jezebel came to think of as the first little happening. She saw Lady Malmsey on a day when Lady Malmsey did not see her, and, seeing, was arrested by something in her look. Jezebel was in the manager's room at the bank at Uncton,

and, while some business was being transacted for her, looked absently through the rusty wire blind into the uneven street. From where she was standing she commanded the spot where years ago had been enacted the little scene that once and for all ("Impertinent little girl!" she could hear the words still) had determined the relations between herself and the imperious mistress of Warbeck. As she looked she heard a clatter of hoofs, and a carriage, which she recognized by its liveries, came into sight. It drew up at the door of the bank, and held Lady Malmsey. Jezebel, still half-absently, watched the footman get down from the box and come round to receive his orders. Lady Malmsey gave him some papers and he disappeared into the outer office. Then Jezebel looked at Lady Malmsey. She had not before had opportunity to regard her so closely. Her likeness to Philip — properly, Philip's to her — gave Jezebel's heart a sudden wrench. But it was not that that remained to her afterwards to haunt her; it was the perturbed and harassed expression to which Lady Malmsey's features settled themselves, or returned, as the observer believed, when the servant had been given his directions and was gone. It was such a look as one might wear whose mind was disturbed by the supervening of unforeseen or even dreaded anxiety. What ailed Lady Malmsey? What ailed her . . . ?

Tenfold, what ailed her at the second "happening" a week later? Then Jezebel met her face to face at Ettram. The two were afoot, and Jezebel, encountering her eye full and near, read in it what was the astounding but unmistakable sign of a precipitate impulse to speak. Lady Malmsey, wearing the same air of disquiet, half halted, might be thought to have drawn her breath . . . and passed on in silence. The impulse, strangled as it was at its birth and abandoned, was indubitable, the moment charged with potentialities.

Jezebel went her way amazed. Was she dreaming?

Ettram Street, its one straggling street, with the tiled roofs and the sunken door-steps, the two oil-lamps on their ridiculous posts, and the cobblestones that served for pavement on the sidewalks, was not other than she had always known it. She touched one of her hands with its fellow. What had occurred that the semblance even of a thought of speaking to her should cross Lady Malmsey's mind? Philip was somewhere involved naturally; yet what could have happened to Philip? He might perhaps have delivered her message, but . . .

Jezebel saw Lady Malmsey get into her carriage, which waited for her at the post-office, and "picking up" her own dog-cart at the vet.'s, where invalid Spot had been paying a visit, she drove home with a forehead puckered with wonder.

She hugged herself at a thought. What a wonderful thing she had done! Did Lady Malmsey know what a wonderful thing? For very enmity (all love apart) she, Jezebel Dexter, might have married her enemy's son. There were compensations for dull days and moments that were something more than dull—compensations when yet a third incident in the drama of shades and inflections added itself to the sum of the happenings!

Another week passed; and at a bazaar at St. Eldreds, whither duty took her and her aunt, Jezebel saw Lady Malmsey again. She seemed fated to see her. This time there was no look of anxiety upon her face. Rather, Jezebel thought, did her face wear a look of relief such as might come of the removal of some cause of anxiety. Lady Malmsey was selling. A twinkling Jezebel took advantage of the proud lady's official capacity to come near to her. She seized a moment when Lady Malmsey was in sole charge of her stall to stop at it innocently, and pretend interest in the ugliest thing she could see on it. This was a dreadful beaded cushion with crimson cords and tassels—the sort of thing which is raffled at the end of the day and

for which, in the fervent fear of winning it, the unfortunate take tickets of the importunate. She looked at it as one at a curiosity and inquired the price. Lady Malmsey, if she wished to speak, should have every opportunity.

"The prices are marked on everything, I think you will find," Lady Malmsey said. Her tone was colourless.

Jezebel was at pains to overlook the ticket which was tied to one of the tassels.

"It is a guinea," said Lady Malmsey then.

Jezebel ceased her search at once.

"A guinea," she said; "thank you."

She looked at the beaded monstrosity, and saying "Thank you" again, and that it was "very moderate," passed on to the next stall.

Miss Dexter, buying fearsome water-colours — a pair: "The Close, St. Eldreds," and "Sunny Morning, Ettram Rise" (the work of Miss Weech) — from the artist's mother, interrupted the business of the purchase with a jerk and "Now, what 's that mean, I wonder." She had seen what her niece did not see.

Mrs. Weech was immersed in the interests of the moment; her silk apron with the pockets, her money-bag, the pair of scissors that hung from her waist, and the work of her daughter.

"I beg your pardon?" she said, and, misapprehending, volunteered she had others. "Here is 'A Bit of Moorland near Cattleford Spring,' if you like that better, and 'The Waterworks, Uncton,' or perhaps you 'd rather have a sacred subject. Adela 's so versatile. Here 's a little copy of the 'Last Supper' — that 's only thirty-one and sixpence — or here 's 'St. Cecilia' for eighteen and elevenpence halfpenny."

"No, no," Miss Dexter hastened to say, when she could recall a wandering mind. "Don't, please, unsettle me. The 'Close' thing, and that purple and yellow one — 'Moorland' — what is it? I 've done my choosing."

She hurried the completion of the transaction, and stalked after her niece.

"Abominations," she said, in answer to Jezebel's glance at the parcel she carried. "They 're called water-colours, I believe, and I mean presently to put them down somewhere quietly. But what had you been saying to the Malmsey woman?"

"Been saying?"

Miss Dexter nodded.

"You must have been saying something to her."

"Why?"

"Her face when you had passed on."

"Indignation? I asked the price of a cushion."

"Not exactly indignation," said Miss Dexter, "but a look — questioning — and triumph —"

"Triumph?" said Jezebel. "Triumph?"

"As if — in spite of you — I can't explain —"

"In spite of me?" said Jezebel.

Jezebel went back and bought the cushion.

Lady Malmsey sold it aloofly but politely, and, in truth, looked at her as at one from whom she had nothing to fear. What did it mean? Whatever had exercised Lady Malmsey lately so powerfully, exercised her no longer. So much was evident, and Jezebel, who, at least, had not moved, was stimulated afresh.

Something was in the air, and even dull days were "intriguing." Assuredly, dull days were intriguing. So intriguing were dull days that, though a letter came from Mrs. Baskerville that evening to beg her to go to the Abbey, where life was not stagnant, — to beg her to go, as she was told she had promised, — she determined to stay where she was, and wrote a smiling Not Yet as before.

She had an idea that her story was in some strange process of working itself out on her native soil. She must be on the spot, therefore. So, Not Yet she wrote darkly, and went on with her thinking. Her letter of refusal lay

all night in the box in the hall. She saw it so lying next morning, and, having occasion to drive into Uncton, took it with her to post it.

It was a day of bluster and dust. March had come in like a lion, but was behaving like nothing so sensible. There were gritty racketings, callow tearings, indignities to man and beast, and whatever presented a surface for unseemly buffeting. Trees swayed, and yielded a harvest of twigs, with an occasional branch. On the highroad the storm gave imitations of Sahara, and kings' ransoms would be anywhere to be had for the sweeping, if ever the wind fell.

Hinton Dormoral was sheltered, and the turbulence of the day scarcely to be realized till the park was left behind. It was not very pleasant driving, but, having started, Jezebel determined to go on. Her mind occupied with the events that occupied it somewhat exclusively just then, she was driving with head bent to the blast, when, at the outskirts of Uncton, she heard her name called, and, looking up, saw Lady Margaret Arlington.

"How are you?" Lady Margaret shouted to her from the high seat of her phaeton. "A beast of a day, eh? I 've bin away — yes, visitin'."

Jezebel, without thought of hearing anything connected with the matters that held her, made civil inquiries and comments, when of a sudden her interest was caught, held, and presently riveted.

"I was stayin'," she heard Lady Margaret telling her, "in Warwickshire, and not very far, by the bye, from that fascinatin' friend of yours, Mrs. Baskerville."

"Mrs. Baskerville?"

"What? Yes, Mrs. Baskerville. Stand, Polly! Stand, can't you! It 's this bally wind. I did n't meet her as I should have liked because of some stoopid disagreement — yes, you 'd better go to her head, Thomas — between my hostess, a dear kind creature, but just a thought nar-

row, and your friend, or your friend's friends, or somethin'. You know the sort of absurd strained relations — I haven't patience with 'em — that are only possible in the country" (Jezebel thought she knew); "not on visitin' terms, and all that nonsense. But I saw her two or three times at meets and things, and I must say I never saw any one turn out better. What surprised me, though, was to find young Malmsey there."

"There? Where?"

Jezebel brought her cart closer.

"*There*," said Lady Margaret. "Eh? There. He was stayin' at — what 's the name of their place? — the Abbey, that 's it; near Pole Abin'don. What?"

"Nothing. The wind blew your words about."

"I saw him several times, not to speak to, because, as I say, of this tiresome disapproval on the part of the Manor, where I was, of the Abbey where he was. Oh, yes, he was stoppin' with the Baskervilles right enough."

Jezebel soothed her horse mechanically as he showed a disposition to restlessness. At the Abbey? . . . But Mrs. Baskerville hardly knew him. . . . And knew . . . and had not mentioned him. . . . She looked at Lady Margaret incredulously.

The wind chose this moment to thrust Lady Margaret's hat over her eyes, and Jezebel waited with what patience she could contrive till the good lady should succeed in releasing the veil which caught on a brooch. From under the hat as from under an extinguisher came the sound of voluble protest. Lady Margaret wrestled in driving gloves, and with fingers that seemed to be thumbs. Jezebel, at the limit of her patience with a "Here, let me," was on the point of going to her assistance when the flimsy netting gave suddenly, and Lady Margaret was free.

"Well, never mind," she said. "I wanted a noo one; and what was I tellin' you? Ah, to be sure! Pole Abin'don, Philip Malmsey. He was payin' quite a long visit. I left

him there ten days ago, and he 'd bin there nearly three weeks then I was told."

But . . . thought Jezebel, and but . . . Every way it was but, and why, and besides. "Some one else." Philip? The unnamed, Philip in fine? Philip! Then Mrs. Baskerville. . . ! Lady Margaret's chance words pointed the reticence of her, Mrs. Baskerville's, letter. This lingering over the Handkerchief, and this scamping the mention of Philip with "Some one else," and "You will be amused . . ." Taking one thing with another, it looked like not treating her quite openly, did n't it? — though why — why? She could not guess why . . . unless . . . which she hesitated to believe. It would have been natural, surely (only natural, you would have supposed), to speak of the presence of Philip. The thought of Lady Malmsey's son and Mrs. Baskerville, bracketed even loosely, involved some readjustment of ideas arrived at more or less by processes of reasoning. It would take the thinker a little while to accustom herself to it. Lady Malmsey! The small happenings! She almost laughed out. Had she really "ill-wished" (and again) to some purpose? "One less harmless . . ." A jest and more than a jest! How her father would have chuckled. . . .

Lady Margaret's voice broke through her musings, and her words had an aptness that was startling.

"I 've a sort of an idea," she said — "I can't help smilin' when I think of it — that his mother did n't much like his bein' there. I saw her yesterday comin' away from the bazaar — I did n't go meself — and when I spoke of havin' seen him at Pole Abin'don she caught me up in a sort of way with 'Oh, yes! he had been in Warkwickshire for a day or two (a day or two!), but had gone abroad with his friend, Mr. Mundham — Rome, or Florence, or somewhere.' I assure you I think his bein' there made her uneasy. You know what she is."

Jezebel shook her head.

"I am the Abbey, you see, to her Manor — was it?"

"I always forget," Lady Margaret said. "Well, whatever she may have bin afraid of, there was young Master Philip as large as life, not for one week nor two, but goin' on for a month, ridin' and drivin' about, and spendin' the time, I suspect, very pleasantly. Upon me word, it's amusin'. Well, well! I must be gettin' on. Thomas!"

"Amusin'!" Jezebel, should just think it was. It was also as plain as a pike-staff. The Abbey, Lady Malmsey's anxiety; Mrs. Baskerville ("some one less harmless"), the impulse to speak; Rome, Florence, or somewhere with Anthony Mundham, the Lady Malmsey of the bazaar! What further need of witnesses?

Jezebel went to the Ram, where she tore up her letter, and calling for pens and paper, wrote another. She would go, after all, to the Garden of Nuts.

## CHAPTER XX

The Abbey was a rambling house of many styles and dates, and gave Jezebel welcome one evening not many days later.

Jezebel, who by that time had done a good deal of thinking, passed through its portals with somewhat complicated feelings, leaving her attitude towards its mistress to be determined by circumstance, and leaving, as all must leave, something to chance.

Mrs. Baskerville met her on the threshold, and with such cordiality as went far to dissipate any doubts that might flicker in Jezebel's breast. Jezebel suffered herself to be kissed, and to respond. It was difficult to impute guile to one with a manner and mien so — so beguiling.

Mrs. Baskerville, smiling, said "Dearest," and drew her to the hearth, where, her arm linked through hers, she asked of her health, and the comfort or discomfort of the journey, and so on; laughed with her, and was girl to her girl.

The evening was chilly, and the cheerful fire that burned in the hall where they were, and that threw ruddy beams on to the polished oak and the armour, the heads and the horns, the skins and their own shining eyes, would alone have had its influence in disarming her — if indeed there were any disarming to do, upon which point Jezebel herself was not sure.

Big Mr. Baskerville — "Teddy," his very name a good-natured complacency! — came out of a room at hand, from which proceeded the click of billiard balls and an occasional sound of voices, and gave her portly greeting. Then "Come," Mrs. Baskerville said, and led the way to her sanctum, where tea was brought to the traveller ("You 'd

like tea, I know, even if dinner tread close on the heels of it, would n't you?"), and whence, linking her arm again through her guest's, she led her presently to the gleaming bedroom where Weston, the deft, was unpacking.

Jezebel had "thoughts" at the back of her mind, and despite the partial allaying of her doubts, subjected Mrs. Baskerville, almost involuntarily, to a sort of mental scrutiny. Philip had stayed here. Sooner or later, inevitably, Mrs. Baskerville or some one else in the house must speak of him, and when and how his name would be spoken made matter for an odd game of speculation that, whether she would or would not, she found deeply engrossing.

Philip's name was spoken at once. Mrs. Baskerville either had a clear conscience, none, or was diplomatic indeed.

"Beau 's here," she said, "and I expect Dinah Fortnam on Wednesday. Half your ball party, you see — and talking of that, were n't you a little surprised? — and amused? — about Philip Malmsey?"

It was taking the bull by the horns, if nothing else.

"You guessed?" Mrs. Baskerville said. "Surely you guessed?"

Jezebel shook her head.

"N-o," she said, "I did n't guess. You see, I hardly knew that you knew him."

Mrs. Baskerville laughed.

"I hardly did know him," she said.

"But you know him now."

Mrs. Baskerville gave her a glance of inquiry.

"I wonder."

It was Jezebel who wondered.

"And you did n't guess?" Mrs. Baskerville said, when she had told something of the meeting at Warbeck station and the subsequent journey.

"How could I?"

"I suppose," Mrs. Baskerville said contemplatively, "it *was* rather funny," and smiled as at recollections. "He's a nice boy," she added — "the veriest baby! But engaging! Is n't he engaging, Jezebel?"

The sound of a gong spared Jezebel an answer. Mrs. Baskerville kissed her and shimmered out of the room in one beautiful dress, presently to shimmer back in another.

Jezebel, looking at her, wondered whether it was her very beauty, something in her exquisite wearing of exquisite clothes, something in the sinuous lines of her figure, her neck, the nape of her neck, that . . . that what, pray? She pulled herelf up. Mrs. Baskerville could hardly be more delightful, and was her hostess. She took herself vaguely to task, yet without much conviction. What was it? Why now? At Hinton Dormoral a month and a half ago, and knowing little less than she knew at this moment (and what, when all was said, did she know?), she had had no such thoughts. It was not the recollection of her mother's agitation (this had irritated her), nor even Miss Dexter's, "A word in your ear; now or later, Be careful." It was n't the pomegranate and what it might symbolize, the lotus flower, the significant Vivimus. It was Philip in relation to these things. Philip the "nice boy," the "veriest baby," . . . the thought of his initiation to — well, the mysteries of the Garden of Nuts.

Mrs. Baskerville's voice, the soft voice with the pleasant inflections, broke on Jezebel's ear and caused her an instant misgiving. Impossible, as she had felt on arriving, to impute guile to one so beguiling. She would not be prejudiced. She liked, and she wanted to like, Mrs. Baskerville. Arm in arm they went down the wide stairs.

Beau Dawlish stood warming himself in the hall. He turned at the sound of their approach and shook hands with Jezebel. The three lingered talking awhile and presently moved on towards the drawing-room, where one and another of the party staying in the house joined them.

Jezebel, talking to Beau Dawlish, took a newcomer's note of her company, and was agreeably conscious of her company's notice of her. It was not difficult to gauge the impression she was making. She could hear Mrs. Baskerville talking about her; heard "Yes, is n't she?" and, "Not quite like *any* one else," and reproached herself again for her disloyal inclinations.

Dinner had been put off a quarter of an hour on her account, and all were assembled except Mr. Baskerville when it was announced. Mr. Baskerville appeared some five minutes later, neat, unhurried, but suavely apologetic; and, taking the chorus of protestant banter that greeted him, with the imperturbable good temper of a fat man used to chaff, led the way to the dining-room. The comfortable proportions of Mr. Baskerville — proportions the easefulness of which spoke good-nature in every curved line — had, I think, part of some sort (though whether as cause or effect it were difficult to say!), in the moral economy of the Garden of Nuts. Constrained to present whatever qualities he had, in the flesh, having little or no other medium to work in, Mr. Baskerville was amiability incarnate. Jezebel had liked him at Hinton Dormoral (his well-wishing Goblessu still clear in her mind), and sitting between him and Beau Dawlish continued to like him.

The Garden of Nuts, viewed from the end of Jezebel's first evening, was a pleasant place enough. Life in it seemed a smooth, a gracious, and an amusing thing, and living to have an air of taking a place amongst the fine arts, or of writing itself frankly a pursuit.

Mrs. Baskerville came to her room with her, and, having chatted awhile, left her with lulled doubts, with doubts indeed so lulled that Weston's, "I hear that Lord Malmsey was staying here quite a long while," struck a discordant note. She did not suffer the subject to be pursued, and, though she saw that Weston was bursting with gossip, dismissed her as soon as might be.

But when Weston was gone, Jezebel, having thought to sleep, found that she could not. Her loyalty was to cost her her rest — or maybe it was the light of the fire that made her wakeful. The dancing flames jigged on the chintzes and played in the mirrors and all shining things. She watched till she could not lie longer, and rose. She slipped on a dressing-gown and, relighting a candle or two, looked at the books on her table. But neither was she in a reading mood, and she turned over leaves to no purpose. She was excited and even expectant, so that putting her hand over her heart she could feel its quickened beating. She went to the dressing-table and looked into her face as if she would read in it the answer to some question. "Quite a long while," had said Weston.

Where was he now? Her eyes in the glass were like pools of ink. They reminded her of the eyes of the portrait at home that had had its absurd influence on her childhood, and she laughed at her reflection and caught the Bacchante look with which she had been told Philip's cousin had credited her. She could do as she liked with her life, she knew that. The gods had laid gifts at her feet rich and abundant as those with which they had dowered Mrs. Baskerville herself, and to judge by looks that she had seen in a face or two she had only to raise her finger or eyelid or lip. . . .

It was the house that was exciting, something of subtlety in its atmosphere. She felt as if she should never sleep again, or sleeping should sleep heavily. "If Philip . . ." she said to herself almost breathlessly, "if Philip . . ." and made no attempt to finish her sentence.

Something fell from a book she was holding. It was an empty envelope which had served some one for a book-marker, and she picked it up absently. She was in the act of replacing it, when the direction upon it caught her eye. The envelope bore Philip's name. She looked at it curiously and began to tremble. Philip had been reading the

book that she held. Philip's hands had held what she was holding. She was in the room perhaps that he had occupied. The possibility raised a tumult of feelings within her. A pleasure that was in great degree pain was amongst them, and a sensation of suffocation. The room took a new aspect. She saw it as she had seen Mrs. Baskerville when she had thought of her in relation to him — saw the looking-glasses as frames for his face; the deep wicker-chair as a thing that had held him by fires that danced as this fire was dancing; he had stretched his length upon the chintz-covered couch at the foot of the bed; and looked from these windows. She saw all with new eyes. She went to one of the casements and, drawing aside the curtains, peered into the darkness, to turn back again throbbing and pale.

It began to matter horribly that Philip should have been here. The sight of his name, meagre record as it was of his recent presence, brought him before her and gave her the sound of his voice. She saw him as she had seen him last, when she went out of the room at Hinton Dormoral and left him — with Mrs. Baskerville! With Mrs. Baskerville! She caught her breath. "To," perhaps, in the light of subsequent events, would have expressed the case more aptly. Mrs. Baskerville had not been slow; but neither had Philip. But neither had Philip; and "boy," "baby," even, though he might be, he had his share of free will with the rest of us! She thought of the night of the ball and the sight of Philip passing over to the enemy. She had seen — of course she had seen! — and remembered the sudden humility (the mystery of it!) that ousting her pride had not suffered her to waylay him, as she believed that with a word or a look she might have waylaid him, to the possible changing of the destinies of the hour! She might have used arts and had used none. She remembered the He must come to Her — the test (it was almost a test) by which she had been constrained to judge him, and by which she had found him so wanting.

She shut her eyes as she thought of it; shut them tightly like a child, at the recollection of the enchanted weeks that had come before any need of a test; weeks of days, happy, intimate, charged with promise as spring, and holding a hundred small signs of his thought of her, for her, and of the response of his thoughts to her thoughts. It had been folly perhaps to hazard the well-being of such days! By what right did he cause her such suffering? She had been heartsick, if, thank God! she could laugh; then, suddenly, callous (which was hardly less painful!), and able to release her humility — to see it fly as a bird from a cage. After that, laughing still, she had laughed at him frankly. But how much suffering, laugh as she would, he had caused her! By what right? By what right? How dare he?

The room became a place of torment to her. In vain she told herself that she had learned nothing that she did not know. The spirit of Philip was everywhere, and all the pain that she had ever endured at his hands was recalled to her. She took the envelope that bore his name and tore it to pieces, to small pieces, to pieces yet smaller. Then gathering them into the hollow of her two hands, she held them for a few moments to her lips. She would not cry. She had not cried yet (oh, this room, oh, this room, and his face on the pillows!), she had not cried yet, and was not going to cry. By all the traditions of Hinton Dormoral she was not going to cry.

## CHAPTER XXI

Weston, with an incomprehensible mistress under her eyes, and the talk of the house in her ears, wore a puzzled, a helpless, and an apprehensive air. She knew not in truth what to make of Miss Jessy, and, after a course of walkings and talkings with the other ladies' maids, feared rather than otherwise to know what to make of the life that was lived by the set to be met at the Abbey.

Miss Jessy feared nothing, shrugged her shoulders at what deprecating caution Weston ventured to hint to her, and would not listen nor be serious at all. Gammon and Spinach presented her attitude towards admonition. Weston was reminded of the days in her childhood, when for a time she was out of control, and Lord Dormoral had called in the aid of Miss Moulton. There was no Miss Moulton now to offer a restraining influence, and the Abbey itself offered no restraints whatsoever. When Weston was not thinking to herself that she did not "quite like" this one of its occupants, she was thinking that she did not quite like that. She shook her head with a frequent "Dear, dear, dear, dear!" or a "T't, t't, t't, t't!" It was n't exectly one thing nor another. It was nothing you could take hold of. It was in a glance, or the lifting of a nose; in a tone or a gesture. It was the "spirit" of things — you could n't grasp that and display it; it was what was said; and implied; and taken for granted. It was notably, perhaps, what was taken for granted.

It was all of it Very High Life; Weston had no doubt on that point. But very high life seemed a parlous thing — though *all* high life, Weston *would never believe* (the fervent italics, hers), was like this high life! — and better mediocrity than these carryings-on. Such a coupling of

names as she heard in the servants' hall! — such a coupling of names as never was under the sun! You might hear there the story of a diamond necklace or of a paying of bills. You might hear what you might hear openly in the dining-room, for there was nothing that was not spoken — the *t*'s, to be sure, left uncrossed, and the *i*'s every one left undotted — and spoken with laughter. Hinton Dormoral was n't squeamish. Miss Dexter talked robustly, and so, in his life, had Lord Dormoral talked. Miss Jessy had not been "brought up prudish," but there were, or there ought to be, limits.

It was vain to attempt the approach of the object of all her anxieties. What had come to Miss Jessy? One would have said she was wantonly damaging her interests. It could do her no good to be talked about with this Mr. Dawlish that she was spending so much of her time with. Weston was reminded of Lord Dormoral's "What 's to be done with us? We 're botching Miss Jezebel's chances between us." It was Miss Jessy herself now who was "botching her chances." She would "botch" them further in London, or her Weston was greatly mistaken, if she entered it under the Baskerville wing. Yet Lord Dormoral himself had arranged . . . What a tangle it was! Look which way you would there were knots. It was useless to speak to Miss Dexter. She, too, would say Gammon and Spinach. Worse than useless to think of Mrs. Riversley. Poor broken lady, what power had she? If help came it would not be from these quarters. Weston had visions of her Precious toughened and free like Miss Fortnam, or other-toughened, albeit gentle and soft and radiant, like Mrs. Baskerville. Dreadful! Something or some one must save her.

Jezebel herself, imbued with the spirit of the place (was it that? was it that? or was there some reason that Weston knew not, or at which she might only guess vaguely?), recked little enough of salvation. She jumped to the lan-

guage of the house, neither with complete comprehension of it, nor quite innocently either, and "said things" like every one else. Her youth gave her ventures in discreet indiscretion something of piquancy. Had she not always been a little precocious? — "pecrocious" her own word at seven! Mrs. Baskerville laughing said sometimes, "*My dearest!*" and a man or two, gaily, "Oho!" to seek her eye thereafter, as Beau Dawlish so often sought it, with speculation in his own. Once or twice our young woman perceived herself misunderstood, but shrugged careless and undaunted shoulders. Nor did she indeed care. She would not have been Jezebel if she had cared, and it was to be her lot to be Jezebel, she could see that. It was clearly on "Jezebel" lines that she was destined to run. Her eyes were not shut. Why should she trouble herself?

"My dear," Lady Pentonville, the most shimmering of the young married women, said to her, "your name! I'd give worlds for it. You'll prance into London. You'll see nudgings and hear 'Jezebel Dexters!'"

"There," suggested Jezebel, "but for the grace of God . . . !"

"Quite the other way. Here, failing the grace of God, while there. . . . Do you see? And you'll be such a help to Dolly. People said such unkind things."

"One must try to deserve them."

"But, my dear, not of you — I don't mean of you! Of Dolly Baskerville, I mean, who is the dearest thing. You see her name nearly did get into the papers that time — I wonder a little bit that Beau comes here *just* yet — and there is a house or two that . . . well, people are so ridiculous!"

It was a moment or two before Jezebel understood that Lady Pentonville was saying in so many words, Oh, wise Mrs. Baskerville, who, chaperoning one whom people (in a vulgar world *bien entendu!*) might be expected to want at their parties, would pass through a portal or so that

else had been barred to her! The "Mrs. Baskerville brought Miss Dexter" of Jezebel's anticipation might read then, for those in the know, that Miss Dexter admitted Mrs. Baskerville. *What* a funny world! If she did, as Lady Pentonville prophesied, prance into London, once there, she would prance hither and thither to buoyant airs of the "Patatras" kind (so much she promised herself), and make life pay its debt to her! There would be stories. They would reach orderly Philip, and she would laugh to keep him away from the town.

Others besides Lady Pentonville, assisting, it might be, in opening her eyes, and piqued perhaps by her looks, laid stress on her name as upon her title to distinction. There were always to be points of exclamation, they seemed to imply, and raised eyebrows (even as Lady Malmsey's); but because of these things, and not in spite of them, she was to have her welcome. The old story of the eccentric christening with its attendant scandals, so far from branding her, and also because, in very truth, it did brand her, was to give her, in the slang of the day, such *réclame* as should set less fortunate girls blaming their mothers for failing to provide them with interesting histories.

Every one, at some time or other, — the ladies of the party, at all events, — congratulated her in a manner on being called Jezebel. The name, according to the nature of her who spoke, was quaint, or pagan, or picturesque, as the case might be. Lady Pentonville it was who said pagan — "so alluringly pagan." Miss Fortnam, who knew Lady Pentonville, and had, as she said, just about as much opinion of her as you could put on a Maundy penny, doubted her sincerity, and whispered to Jezebel, "Give it her back; she's a cat." Jezebel, who knew Lady Pentonville's name to be Angela, contented herself with saying that what she liked about the name Jezebel was not so much that it was pagan as that it had all the directness of

the Old Testament, and nothing of finnikin reticence or devout pretension.

On the whole Jezebel could hold her own with the Lady Pentonvilles of Mrs. Baskerville's friends. In the coming and the going of people at the Abbey, the Pentonville type (which was the Jute type and the type Balltry) was dominant but not entirely predominant. There was a skirmish or two by the way, and out of such skirmishes Jezebel did not emerge vanquished or crestfallen, or even ruffled. The blood of her father ran in her veins, and she had full measure of the fighting spirit of her fighting aunt, but she had also less impetuosity than either of them, and could temper heat with judgement. Her most formidable wrestlings were with herself, and at night, when she was alone in the room that Philip had slept in. . . .

She set her face towards London where, for what good it might do her (and there would not, she supposed, be wanting some to say "Much" in the orthodox way!), she was to be the "pointed-out" girl who, herself finely talked about, was to whitewash Mrs. Baskerville! "A mad world, my masters!" Was it a funny world? Was n't it? Cause and effect in a world such as this appeared terms interchangeable. In so mad a world why fight your destiny? Mischief held Jezebel, recklessness, irresponsibility.

When the races were over, Weston braced herself, and put tentative questions as to the length of the stay her mistress intended to make. Her fears had been reinforced by that time by the fears that were contained in a letter that lay in her exercised pocket. Jezebel's mother had seen in "one of the papers" that Jezebel was staying at Pole Abingdon, and had written in frenzy. There were dark writings in this letter (Mrs. Riversley never could speak to the point): "Sooner or later she will know," was one of them. Weston, her nerves a trifle out of order, felt something of the irritation Jezebel herself in like case had

experienced. Why could n't the poor lady speak out, and give you something to go upon? That sooner or later Miss Jessy would know, was not enough. Weston moreover was to "say nothing." "I have no right" . . . Mrs. Riversley wrote, and much else in the same strain.

"Take care of her!" "Guard her from evil!" With her life if need be, but what to do when Miss Jessy only laughed?

"What 's in your head?" Jezebel asked her at last, in response to the probing of her antennæ rather than to her actual questions.

"Nothing," said Weston. "What should be, 'm? I was only wondering."

"You 've taken to wondering," said Jezebel, "have n't you, dear foolish?"

"Ah, I 've reason to wonder!" said Weston.

"I said you 'd a thought in your head," said Jezebel, smiling.

Weston said nothing.

"Mrs. Baskerville wants me to stay on till we go to London."

"And not go back 'ome?"

"No."

"Not first even?"

Weston's face was as blank as a north wall.

"What for, my Didgy?"

"Oh, well —" said Weston. There were hundreds of reasons. "There 'll be your dresses —" she began, "— for one thing. I must have time —"

"There 'll be runnings up to London for those," said Jezebel. "Better from here than from far Hinton Dormoral."

"But you 'll surely," said Weston, "want to see Miss Dexter who 'll want to see you? It does seem a long while to be away. I never thought when we started — a week, p'r'aps, I thought, or a fortnight at the very houtside."

"Come, what is it?" said Jezebel.

"It 's everything," said Weston. "Oh, Miss Jessy, if you 'd only mind. Oh, do please mind, Miss Jessy."

Weston's "Mind," spoken thus, was Beware. "Mind the 'orse!" in perambulator days had been an injunction with which Jezebel, afoot and caught suddenly by one hand, had been familiar upon the roads. Mind! Mind! It was the *Gare!* of the French.

Jezebel was impracticable.

"Mind what?" she said, shaking Weston by the shoulders she could wheedle.

Weston would n't be laughed out of her fears.

"No, no, Miss Jessy, it 's no laughing matter. It's, it's . . ."

"What?"

"Not as it should be. That I should say it! I can't bear to see you. Why will you? — and him neither single as you may say nor yet married — and the list his poor wife had against him, for all there was a name or two kept out of it by *pressure in high quarters brought to bear*, as long, they tell me, as your arm!" (The habit of fervent italics grew fast upon Weston.)

"This is rank gossip," said Jezebel. "You must n't repeat these things to me."

"Forgive me, Miss Jessy," said Weston, who felt indeed that she had greatly dared. "But if I repeated the half. . . . It 's just that, and that I can't bear to see you walk blindly. . . ."

"I 'm not walking blindly," said Jezebel, smiling. "For my age I think my eyes are wonderfully well open."

Weston sighed heavily.

"It would be odd if they were n't," Jezebel added. "I 'm exceptionally placed. You must own that my circumstances have been favourable for the early opening of my eyes. In that way, Didgy dear, I 've had every advantage."

She would not be serious.

"It 's for that very reason that it behoves us to be so careful. Miss Jessy, let 's go away 'ome. If we 're to go to London . . ."

"If!" said Jezebel. "If!"

"Well, p'r'aps it 'll be different there, though I don't know. But do let us go back awhile first — asking your pardon, my precious, for making so bold. You 're in a exceptional position . . . and all London people, as I tell myself times and again, 's not like this lot, I 'll never believe, for all that I know that Society 's not what it was! You 're so young, too, that 's another reason — though old as you say for your age. If only your dear aunt would get you presented and give you your season, as why should she not? But, Miss Jessy, my tongue 's run away with me, and I never intended to speak out so free. It 's my care for you. If you heard all that I hear downstairs you 'd not wonder — me who 've lived in good families and thought I knew something! And young Lord Malmsey, too — there was a surprise . . ."

But Weston had gone too far by a hair's breadth, and knew it as she saw sparks in her young mistress's eyes.

"Once for all, Didgy," Jezebel said in a voice that had taken a sudden new tone, "understand me! I won't listen to any backstairs gossip soever. Don't let me say this again."

She spoke peremptorily, and left Weston to ruminate upon what good she had done and what harm. Little enough good, thought Weston despondently, and could, like the Bethesda of "That 's what Jessy *is* short for," have cut out an indiscreet tongue! Meddling fool that she was! And not quite meddling either, for up to a certain point Miss Jessy had seemed not entirely indisposed to hear her. Fool, then, and ten times fool to have lost the ground she had gained!

By exactly one hair's breadth had Weston exceeded

the licence allowed her. All mention of Philip at this time, almost all thought of him, put Jezebel's ears back, set her showing white in a dangerous eye, and a disposition to take the bit in her teeth. It was touch and go with her. Go what? Go where? Goodness knew. Throw in her lot with the lot of the dwellers in gardens of nuts, she supposed! There were worse lots and worse places.

She laughed under her breath on the Nun's Walk, a lonely strip of grass-grown gravel whither she betook herself for solitude and where, fretting and chafing as one in bondage, she cast about her for means of putting herself even with fate. She was in a bad way, poor Jezebel, and knew it. She walked with clenched hands and working fingers. For ten minutes she walked restively and then slowly cooled down, soothed it may be by the calming influences of the straight path between the dark cypresses. Here, when the Garden of Nuts was a Garden of God, dead and gone women wrestling perhaps for their souls as she in her hour was wrestling for Heaven knew what, had walked and found comfort. She softened. Poor Didgy who loved her, and feared, and was right! Should she go home after all . . . even "chuck" Mrs. Baskerville's London? Should she? Should she? She did n't take Didgy's desperate views, but clearly she was getting no good. She was free; young; could afford to wait. What was a season more or a season less in a lifetime even if her Aunt Dexter did not step into the breach?

But in the end she shook her head. Mrs. Baskerville . . .! was she not "friends" with her? Impossible! Wholly impossible!

She went back to the house and slipped up to her room. Weston came to her with a scared face.

"There, Didgy," Jezebel said. "I did n't mean to be cross to you."

"It is n't that," said Weston hysterically, "it is n't that," and burst into tears. "You can't stay here. You

can't, Miss Jessy. I was right — righter than even I thought for. You don't know who 's just come. His luggage is down in the hall. Oh, Miss Jessy, I 've had such a turn."

Jezebel's thoughts flew to Philip.

"Who?" she said quickly. "Who?"

"Not a minute older, he is n't! Oh, Lord, this passes everything. It brings it all back. Her poor ladyship! Young Mr. Riversley. That 's who it is. Your — your step-father, Miss Jessy! Her ladyship's 'usband."

It was also, as Jezebel guessed in a moment, the Handkerchief.

## CHAPTER XXII

"You can't meet him, Miss Jessy," said Weston.

"But can't I!" said Jezebel. "Can't I!"

She was white as Weston herself, and her limbs were trembling. She had not any doubt as to Mr. Riversley's identity with the stranger upon the boat, and only wondered that she had not suspected so likely a contingency sooner. No thought of him had entered her head, yet also it seemed to her as if some subconscious self had "known all the time." An insensate anger passed through her, shaking her — an anger against him; against life; against the maliciousness of circumstance; against herself, for thoughts that once had set her looking at the scar on her hand and the square of fine cambric; against Mrs. Baskerville, who had jested! Good God, what a world!

Weston was leaning against the end of the sofa and repeating at intervals: —

"Miss Jessy, we must n't be under one roof with him — not under the same roof with him, Miss Jessy, I beg of you!"

Jezebel was thinking, and did not heed. She stood by the dressing-table, her mind working rapidly, and her fingers playing with a trinket which Mrs. Baskerville that morning had given her, and which her eyes at this moment did not even see. It was the promised pomegranate, a toy in shining enamel, set about with small diamonds, and pendant to a slender gold chain. She took it "in and out," as we say, of its case, and wound or unwound the chain about her fingers.

Weston, rocking herself, talked on.

"How it brings all back! So 'andsome he is, and not a day older! He must be years over forty when you come

to think, though younger than her ladyship — which he always was, even then — but, I declare, you would n't take him for thirty. Not that her ladyship did n't look wonderfully and young, too, at Hinton Dormoral in the autumn, as you yourself passed the remark. You 'd never think to look at either of them as they could have been grown up when you were born. It does all seem so strange. It 's you seeming older than you are, perhaps. I remember the day of the christenin' as well as well. The church was packed. You 'd 'ardly believe. And your dear father, Miss Jessy. *He* meant no 'arm, no more than your aunt did, to you. It was all a dreadful mistake, as me and Mrs. Rumbold 's said times and again. *I* knew the mistake his lordship was making, knowing her ladyship. Her poor ladyship! and now for you to meet your step-father under one roof! You must n't, Miss Jessy, be under one roof with him."

"I don't know," Jezebel said absently, "what the roof has to do with us."

"Your paths lie asunder," said Weston. "Her dear ladyship 's different; she 's your mother. But he — we must always remember it was he caused all the trouble! Not that I want to judge or to blame. There were excuses, and faults on both sides — that no one knows better. But you and him oceans should part."

"You 've been reading novelettes," said Jezebel.

She had heard partly. She was thinking, thinking, thinking. Her mind was as a clock from which one has detached the pendulum, and the wheels of which scurry in unbridled haste. At one moment she was thinking of Riversley in relation to herself. Had not his words had the air of having some inner significance? Had not his appearance, his manner, his voice burned themselves upon her memory as the spark had burned itself into her flesh? "At the outset . . . an injury!" He had known her — by her looks, she supposed. She should have guessed —

might have guessed! At another, she was thinking of him in relation to her mother — the "poor mother" of her thoughts, with whom, since the meeting at Hinton Dormoral, she had kept up the correspondence which, regular enough in its conduct, contained none of those intimate confidences that pass, or should pass, between mother and child. It was difficult to think of the Handkerchief in relation to her. And then she thought of the Handkerchief in relation to Mrs. Baskerville, which was also to think of him in relation to her mother! "To let you go to her," she heard her mother saying. . . . "To let you go to her — it was like christening you over again . . ."

Truly, as she had said, her circumstances had been exceptionally favourable for the opening of her eyes. She had had every advantage.

The first humiliation that the tragi-comic facts of her history had ever caused her she experienced now. Her emotions, which were many, were complex. She could not forget her thoughts. Her mother's "some day you will know," was with her too (as in substance it lay, unknown to her, in the pocket of Weston), and repeated itself with dogged and sinister persistence. Life thrust too much knowledge upon her . . . asked of her too full a comprehension . . . insisted a little too strongly . . . was brutal! Was her youth to save her nothing? She knew that other girls, for the preservation of the bloom of their innocence, — that bloom which was held to be priceless, — were "sheltered," "spared," deluded even; and, impatient and contemptuous as she was of any juggling with truths, she could yet gauge the greatness of the wrong that was done her.

For the second time since her arrival at the Abbey she found herself struggling with tears. Her lips trembled. She wanted to hide. She wanted her father — not to reproach him, but to be understood of him, to hear his

"Child of my heart," "Dusky-locks," "Trouble-the-house," and to tell him how unhappy she was, and that it was n't his fault, and that she did n't care a bit. She did not care, she told herself — did not care. It was life, the tactless and indelicate, that should be ashamed. Moulty with the looped hair could have helped her now. . . . From Miss Moulton her thoughts fled to Boulogne as on wings. There were spots on the ramparts where she would like to be standing — lonely places, where nothing disturbed you, and whence you might look down on the town. A nun telling her beads would pass silently by, or a priest with his breviary, or an odd little broken woman in black. How quiet! — what stillness! — what peace! Where the outer wall of the rampart was high you might rest on your arms. She remembered the cold touch of the grey stone . . . and, once more, the shining of the railings that bordered the steps leading down into the deserted ways of the Haute Ville, where the roofs clustered thickly. Here one might hide . . .

Through her reverie, her thoughts slowing now, she heard Weston pursue her lament.

"It is but what might be expected! — might *have* been, that is — for the minute I set foot in this house I 'd a feeling deep down in my mind. What it was I don't know, and don't ask me, Miss Jessy; but crossing the very threshold something seemed to come upon me. . . . I 've heard of such things — presentiments, that 's what they 're called . . . seemed to come over me all in a minute. But little did I think we 'd meet young Mr. Riversley. Young Mr. Riversley! But there! That 's what he was to every one in those days; and, upon my word, it 's young Mr. Riversley still, for one better to wear, as I tell you, I never did see. Oh, Miss Jessy, the turn I got! I come upon him in the 'all, as near as I might be to you (where I 'd gone to put your letters in the box), and I went cold all over. He did n't see me. No, Miss Jessy, I 'd the

presence of mind, if I was ready to drop, and stepped back. That I shall always be thankful for. Oh, my dear, if you could 'ide and slip away without seeing him."

This had been Jezebel's own thought a moment before —the thought of the Jezebel of the trembling lip—but . . . Hide? Fly? Cry? Not the normal Jezebel's way— not the way of the Dexters! She cast about her afresh for means to fight fate with its own weapons. Where was a weapon blunt enough, harsh enough, cruel enough? Show her where to find such an one and she would use it, let it hurt her as it might in the wielding.

Weston said, "To think of it! Only to think of it!" and Jezebel at the mercy of thoughts moved impatiently. Just now it was Philip's name had set her ramping, and raging, and inwardly railing. . . . These forced bracketings were maddening. They were part of the brutality. Oh, to be able to retaliate . . . to deal blow for blow!

She panted for vengeance.

It is said to be at such moments that Satan . . .

There was a knock at the door, and Weston, looking at her first as if to say, "What fresh trouble is in store for us?" went to see who was there.

It was Mrs. Baskerville's maid with a note. Weston, after a short whispered colloquy with the bearer, brought the little screw of paper to her mistress.

"Dearest," Mrs. Baskerville wrote, "I have a surprise for you — a couple, indeed, to be accurate, though this is not the point, nor imports. There have come to me two young men of the sons of the prophets. They are bolts from the blue, though they are not at all the less welcome for that. One arrived here while I was driving Angela Pentonville to Ninebury for 'carriage exercise,' and my sins (I do think you might have come with us !), and the other I came upon in Pole Abingdon — though what he was there for beats me, since ours is the only house that he knows in these parts, and the difficulty I had in

carrying him away with me shows that he had no thought of coming to *us!* He said to see a horse. Well, maybe! Such difficulty! I held you out as a bait. (*He knew you were here.* Do I mystify you?) But that even was nearly in vain. Have you ever been held a deterrent? Almost one might have supposed . . .! for he urged one reason and another, which I disposed of — last of all that he had come down without changes of raiment. This brings me to my point, though (my fourth! what a note!) I am not Gehazi coming, as the Lord liveth, to borrow. On the contrary, borrow of me. To put our young man of the sons of the prophets at ease we purpose to dine in improvised fancy dress — just what we can contrive between the soundings of the gong. The theatrical wardrobe — the rag-box — is at every one's disposal. There are all sorts of clothes there to choose from. I fly to my room or would come to you. Send to me for anything you may want. Give your invention full play. Your affectionate D."

What a note! As Mrs. Baskerville said, what a note! What did it mean? The "point" was the least part of it obviously. Jezebel considered, standing yet by the dressing-table. Why had n't Mrs. Baskerville come herself? Were there things that were easier to write? Of the coming of one young man of the sons of the prophets, Jezebel knew (was she not still trembling?), but who was the other? These elaborate jestings, what were they for if not to prepare her? Prepare her for what and for whom? "He knew you were here" . . .

"Have you ever been held a deterrent?"

The second newcomer was Philip!

The room went round for a moment, the furniture, Weston, and the pattern of the carpet moving in an inverse direction to that of the walls. Jezebel felt herself swaying and steadied herself with her hands. In the revolving chaos the scarlet of the satin counterpane on the bed was a note of dazzling colour. Jezebel's eyes were

upon it when all was still and once more in its accustomed place.

The dressing-gong sounded.

Arthur Riversley was here, and it was Philip that she was to dress for. These bracketings! these horrible, horrible bracketings! Give her invention full play? Would she not? An idea! By her namesake a scarlet idea! No need for her of the wardrobe which was kept at the Abbey for theatricals generally and for any such occasion as this. The blunt weapons she had wished for were to her hand.

She scribbled two notes: "Lend me, like a kind person your make-up box," to Miss Fortnam, who dabbled in "acting"; and to Mrs. Baskerville, "What jewels you can spare. I would 'spoil' you as the outgoing Israelites spoiled the Egyptians."

When Weston came back ten minutes later with the box in one hand, and in the other a handkerchief, full of chains, necklaces, bracelets, rings, and miscellaneous gauds, which, when presently they had been emptied into a shining heap on the dressing-table, looked like gems from Aladdin's cave, or the contents of Faust's casket, she found her mistress sitting, half-clad, on the bed, and cutting and tearing the lace from the coverlet.

"Quick!" Jezebel said, "quick! You 've got to do the cleverest, quickest bit of work that you 'll ever have to do in your life. You 've twenty minutes — half an hour, say, for we 'll take a little grace — in which to make a dress and to dress me "

"Miss Jessy!"

Jezebel thrust the scissors into her hands.

"Get this lace off," she said. "There is n't a minute to lose. When you 've done that I shall be ready to show you what to do. Not like that, Didgy! Not stitch by stitch! Rip it off! Hack! Tear! It won't matter. The stuff 's got to be cut. Yes, that 's better. We shall have something to show them for this."

## CHAPTER XXIII

Philip, for it was indeed Philip who was dressing himself at this moment (in clothes he had worn here some weeks back in the tableau in which he had posed as Pygmalion to the Galatea of Mrs. Baskerville), was not in a frame of mind to be envied. The unfortunate encounter with Mrs. Baskerville at Pole Abingdon had put out all his calculations, and landed him in the spot where least and last he desired to be. He had come none the less, as, by retracing our steps, we shall learn, to see Jezebel.

Like Jezebel herself, Philip at this time was somewhat incomprehensible, and if Anthony Mundham, through whose eyes we shall look for a moment, had not been gifted with discernment, the Philip with whom he had been travelling, and from whom he had parted that morning, might have puzzled him as Jezebel puzzled her Weston. Anthony Mundham, however, was not without insight, and when he had seen Philip driven by restlessness and seeming quite other than that which he had always supposed him to be, the cause of the disorder did not long remain hidden from him. Philip, telling him nothing, told him everything. Philip's state at the time Philip claimed him had to do with events subsequent to those known to both of them, or he (Anthony Mundham) was widely at fault in his guessing. Not alone the magic of Jezebel held Philip to torture him. Of so much, Anthony, "rotting" him in schoolboy fashion, or helping him with sympathy less subtly expressed, was persuaded; and, left to conjecture what had happened, had experienced an inclination (having principles less unbending than Philip's!) to wink — at his own reflection in the glass, or the veriest passer-by, or even at Philip himself. He could only conjecture,

for Philip, I say, had enlightened him but indirectly. Philip, howbeit, had effectually enlightened him. Take the outset, and you shall see how. When, having summoned him to Duke Street, Philip declared he must have change of scene, Rome and Florence were put forward, with alternatives further afield, Malta, Cairo, Madeira. Florence was definitely decided upon. What set Philip changing his plans? A chance meeting with Lady Jute, if you please, bound thither to join her elderly husband. The meeting took place at Cook's, where the two had repaired for tickets and time-tables. Lady Jute's "And you?" set Philip looking without hesitation to Monte Carlo, and was his whispered "We don't want Lady Jute or her kind" lost, think you, on Anthony?

Of the choice of Monte Carlo came primarily the wandering. Lady Jute's kind was hardly to be avoided there of all places! and Lady Balltry was one of the first persons our fugitive met at the tables. Her greeting to him had a warmth which his to her lacked in a degree sufficiently marked to confirm Anthony in deductions from reasonings that could hardly be looked upon as very intricate. Lady Jute and her kind, forsooth! What of Philip's late hostess? A chuckle or two in the sleeve was permissible.

Yet he understood. Jezebel had not enslaved him either without teaching him something. He could be thankful to have had sense enough to see that she was not for him; but, by the gods, if she had been for him and he, by a thought, had approached to betraying her, he, too, robust of conscience as he was (he himself had said "healthy!"), would have known what remorse was! Philip up on his pedestal had had further to fall than most of us, and if he had toppled from it would find foothold again with a difficulty proportionately greater than ours in like case. Philip must be on a pedestal! Anthony, as a man of the world, might laugh at him, but his admiration for him was doubled.

Philip was n't the average man. So, Philip, through the eyes of his friend, to whom it seemed a small thing to divert one who needed diversion so sorely.

The two moved at the disturbed will of one of them. Keeping for the most part off tracks that were beaten and following an errant fancy, they had travelled by routes of their own devising. They travelled intelligently, seeing much that is not seen by the tourist. Time so spent could not be looked on as lost. Anthony Mundham, the physician, was not ill-amused, and Philip, the patient, but for the disquietude that he did not seem able to control, did not, in these days of his pilgrimage, appear wholly unhappy. He took Anthony's jests in good part, and jested himself — at his own expense often as not. He had days of depression, however, out of which no joking could rouse him.

He was Philip, you see, with a fixed idea. The Venus Mountain (he would have understood the allusion all too well) had but partially obscured it. The breezes of the Garden of Nuts (but here, it is possible, he would have been "at sea") had swayed, but had failed to uproot it. When he had shaken himself free of what bands of vine and bine and tendrilous creeping plant clung to him, as one who has slept in a barn picks straws from his hair and his garments, and maybe rubs dust from his eyes, he found his thoughts with Jezebel as before. They swung back clean as the needle to the north, and Jezebel's hold on him was but stronger for his dalliance with beguiling influences. He himself, though? There was the rub. You do not mount pedestals for nothing. . . .

Was he the fool that every man, and many women, would have held him? Sometimes he thought so with lighter Anthony, who had adventures, laughingly recounted, and suffered no apparent declension in moral texture. Why then should he, Philip, take himself so seriously — and to task so severely? So did he, however,

argue as he would. He lost sight of extraneous circumstances almost entirely in his self-judgement. His disagreement with his mother, comparatively, was a small thing and easy of adjustment. Jezebel's refusal of him was not now what mattered. These things together had sent him from Warbeck, but in these things did not lie the reasons that kept him from England. Lady Malmsey's antagonism to Jezebel became shadowy in the surprise of his fuller self-knowledge : Jezebel's disdain of him merged in his disdain of himself.

For a time he heard nothing of Jezebel. His mother did not mention her, thinking it best in all likelihood to ignore all that had happened, and he, following a like course, did not write of her. The nearest approach to any allusion to the division between them (the division none the less patent to both) was his mother's occasional "When do you think you will come home?" Wandering like a minstrel, he answered, Not yet.

It was winter in England still, but spring in the south. Philip was young; his energies were unwasted ; there were days when he suffered acutely. A line in a letter from Hugo upset him. Hugo spoke of Mrs. Baskerville's wisdom in getting a beautiful girl to chaperon in the approaching season. "The chaperon in these days is so often the chaperon'd," he wrote. It was the same thought as Lady Pentonville's thought at the Abbey, but was new to Philip. He frowned as he had frowned at the name of Beau Dawlish. Jezebel must not go to Mrs. Baskerville.

"I am tired of Italy," he said to Anthony.

"You have a long-suffering friend," Anthony answered.

"But we have finished Italy."

"In how many weeks? Well, where now?"

"Northwards."

"Home?"

"No."

They went to Lucerne. They were presently in France;

saw a cathedral or two; within a week were in Paris. There, even, Philip did not admit that he was on his way home till the day when a copy of the paper that had so agitated Mrs. Riversley (then some days old) fell into his hands, and he read Jezebel's name in the list of the people whom Mrs. Baskerville was entertaining for the Pole Abingdon meeting. The next day our travellers were this side of the Channel.

At Victoria where the friends parted, Philip said, "I'm not going to try to thank you."

"Rot," said Anthony. "In time, though, you'll tell me."

"If I've anything to tell."

"Well, all luck to you."

"Tony!"

"It's all right, old boy."

They held each other's hands for a moment. The bustle of the busy station was about them.

Having parted with Anthony and left Paxton to see to the heavy luggage and wait his instructions in Duke Street, Philip, taking with him a small bag, crossed London to Euston and went straight to Pole Abingdon. His intention was to put up at an inn for the night and thence despatch a note to Jezebel, to obtain, if it might be, a meeting with her at any place or hour she should see fit to appoint, and leave the rest to fate and his powers of rhetoric. In the train as he travelled he rehearsed the note he would write. It would plead only. At any other time, "You must see me" would have taken the place of "Will you in kindness?" He was imperative by nature rather than suppliant. It was a humbler Philip than the Philip of hitherto who was going to rescue Jezebel from unsuspected dangers; less cocksure a Philip who was going to save Jezebel — from becoming Jezebel. His mission was direct none the less. "Grant me five minutes . . . I beg this of you most earnestly." So he wrote in imagination, nearing Pole Abingdon. Jezebel perhaps would be gone.

For the moment, then, all would be well for her, and his influence might be exerted openly at Hinton Dormoral, instead of clandestinely here, to prevent her from going to Mrs. Baskerville in London. What he chose to think Jezebel's danger, put all else out of his mind. Here was Pole Abingdon. He jumped from his carriage, and almost into the arms of Mrs. Baskerville buying papers.

He cursed his incautiousness, but did not lose his head. There was a horse at the Crown that he had hunted a time or two when he was at the Abbey and that he had had thoughts of buying. He wanted to see him again — had run down for the night. Mrs. Baskerville had too much tact not to accept his statement whether or not she believed it, and said, "And were not coming to us! For shame! But you see you are caught! The carriage is outside."

Philip shook his head and put forward pleas, as we know. In the end it was not Mrs. Baskerville who overruled him, but the knowledge that Jezebel must inevitably hear of his presence. As well then profit by mischance. He would dine but not stay; and that there might be no mistake about the reservation in his acceptance of Mrs. Baskerville's invitation, he left orders at the Crown, where he stopped to engage his room for the night, that a conveyance should be sent for him in the course of the evening.

He was in no mood for the folly of this masquerade for which he now found himself dressing, and in little mood enough for meeting a houseful of people. His shapely limbs — Philip had legs and arms for a sculptor — gave him small satisfaction as he arrayed himself in the free garb of Pygmalion, and when all was done and he surveyed what was really a very fine fellow, indeed, in the long doors of the wardrobe, he frowned as one might frown who saw what was displeasing.

He was at odds, even as Jezebel herself, with circumstance. He was prettily trapped. Easy enough to have said what he wanted to say to Jezebel in some lonely spot! The adventitious circumstances of such a meeting as that for which he had meant to ask, would have made simple and natural what now would be difficult — forced even perhaps. He had thought of the Nun's Walk. It was sheltered, solitary, withdrawn. There in the shade of the cypresses he could have spoken . . . there he believed he could have made Jezebel listen. But here, and now. . . .

The second gong sounded.

Presently there was laughter on the stairs with the sound of voices as the doors were opened and strange forms emerged from the rooms and exchanged banter and cries. Philip descending recognized Miss Fortnam as Liberty. Mrs. Baskerville in flowing draperies presented, as he had expected (and, in a manner, had apprehended), Galatea. There were a Cowboy, a Milkmaid, a Shepherdess, a Pierrot, a St. Elizabeth of Hungary (Lady Pentonville), a Bottle-imp, a Romeo, a Falstaff, and so on to the number of fifteen of the sixteen of the party.

Philip saw each fresh appearance with quickened pulse. The next to come or the next must be Jezebel. He talked to Miss Fortnam, drawing himself as far as might be from Beau Dawlish, of whose presence, in the white raiment of Pierrot, he had but just become sensible (with a further distaste for the box in which he found himself) — talked but at random. He could hardly have said to what views or what sentiments he committed himself in these moments of waiting. The party had assembled in the hall, instead of in the drawing-room, and was disposed in a group which was made up of smaller groups. St. Elizabeth of Hungary talking to Romeo stood near Philip, who heard a word or two of what passed between them. They looked from the Cowboy to the stairs.

"*Les surprises*," St. Elizabeth said, *du divorce*."

"'Papa,' eh? in this case, not 'Mamma.'"

(Philip was astray.)

"A house of surprises," said St. Elizabeth; "where else would you meet under one roof . . . ?"

(Weeping Weston upstairs should have heard and not Philip!)

"The Rag-Box," said Romeo, "would n't run, do you think, to three Pierrots?"

Such fragments of talk Philip heard but did not digest. Dinner had been announced. There was a sense of waiting. The groups within the group shifted. The hands of the clock pointed to the quarter after eight. Above the talking and the beating of his heart Philip thought he could hear the clock's impatient ticking. The very air seemed expectant.

Suddenly there was a movement. With common accord all present appeared to turn towards the stairs. So are crowds swayed at a pageant, so wheel flocks of birds on the wing. It was now. He was going to see Jezebel. He closed his eyes for an instant to steady his sight, and looked with the rest.

There came down slowly one in a long robe of scarlet, sinuous, outlining, close as the scales of a serpent, and for colour a trumpet blast — one loaded with jewels that gleamed as she moved; one with raven hair tired extravagantly, scarlet lips, eyes made long and made wicked with pigment: *Jezebel.*

Midway on the side stairs she paused and looked over the bannisters. There was a moment of silence: no one present but had sense of the moment's significance. She singled out four from the crowd with intent and deliberation, threading them upon a look: Galatea, the Cowboy, Pierrot, and (passing over Falstaff) Pygmalion; then laughed softly, showing glistening teeth through stained lips, and came down looking infamous.

## CHAPTER XXIV

Weston at Hinton Dormoral summed up the issues of the notable evening somewhat (though I doubt her a student of Daniel Defoe) upon this wise: —

To the good: the breaking with Mrs. Baskerville. (One trinket over and above those that had been borrowed had gone back with the jewels that had played their part in Jezebel's folly.) To the good (though no way to behave!): the box on ears with which her young mistress had rewarded certain attentions on the part of one Pierrot who had followed her to her door to wish her good-night, and for whose presumption it must be owned there were excuses to be made — even from the point of view of the indignant Weston, who had seen as she came down the passage. To the good: half a dozen words Weston had had with Mr. Riversley at seven o'clock the next morning, when, meeting her in the hall as he came down for his early breakfast before his early start, he had recognized her and given her a note for her mistress. (He had *not* known, then, that Miss Jessy was there!) To the good: the tears that had sprung suddenly to her mistress's eyes as she read. Weston knew not what Mr. Riversley had written, but of his good faith she had now no doubt soever, and blessed him, having thought to curse. To the good, to the good, to the good, at the last as at the first, the break with Mrs. Baskerville! The dreaded plans of the season were abandoned, and, from what dangers Weston had feared for her, Jezebel was saved. To the good these things. To the bad: what? Everything else. Weston did not, with Robinson Crusoe, balance the points two by two. She lumped the things to the bad in her mistress's obvious unhappiness.

A blight was on Jezebel. She was listless or feverish. She wandered about Hinton Dormoral without purpose, yet as one caged; or drove fast and aimlessly hither and thither on the lonely roads. Spring set free the sap in grove and field and hedgerow, and the country clad itself in green — green to charm you, to soothe or to madden you. The whole world was pasture, set about with many trees. In the woods the lights and the shadows were green. There was a revel of green everywhere — everywhere. Green climbed grey walls. Green tapped at your window. Green made a carpet for your feet, and for your head a canopy. There was a wood Jezebel dared not go near in her wanderings.

Miss Dexter in these days looked at her niece inquiringly, but for the most part in silence. Since Jezebel's announcement of her change of plans, and the talk they had then had regarding it, she had forborne, and she forbore, to urge her confidence. On the whole she was glad Jezebel had decided not to go to London with Mrs. Baskerville. Jezebel had doubtless good reasons. Miss Dexter, therefore, grunted sometimes, and assured her of her approval with, "Well, well, I never thought much of her. She was just a little too good-looking for my taste, and I'm glad on my soul that you quarrelled with her."

Jezebel always protested there had been no quarrel, but would not go to London. Miss Dexter had offered to take her; make an effort; have her presented; take a house; get some clothes even; entertain. Not that year, Jezebel said; but ailed plainly. What was it? Her ailment was not physical, but was none the less real for leaving her eyes bright and robbing her face of no colour.

May passed. In truth Jezebel was sick, sore, sorry. She was ashamed, too. What devil had possessed her? She had only to shut her eyes to see the abominable presentment of herself with which, in blind revolt against the insults of circumstance, she had thought to meet fate upon its

own ground. Her weapons had been turned upon herself. She herself had so turned them. She had sent Philip back to the Garden of Nuts — and "back" I say, for the horrible conviction that the evening had left upon her, that but for her he had not been there! One might in truth have attributed to her the gift of the ill-wish, bidding her weigh her lightest words! — one might laugh, too, in one's sleeve or openly (oh, one might laugh!), *she* was miserable! What if, indeed, as she was inclined to suppose, Philip had not meant to see Mrs. Baskerville! She was haunted by the thought of her conduct . . . (There was Mrs. Baskerville. . . . Let him go to her. . . . What hindered?) . . . and by something in his face — something that was there when she looked over the bannisters, and that had disappeared as the evening wore on. One look, while she played her wanton game and gave him her shoulder, had been blotted out by another, as, in a magic-lantern, the slide we have seen is effaced by the slide that we see. Oh, Philip! Jezebel said to herself, gauging the extent of her culpability; and, to no purpose, Oh, Philip!

How go to London when London held Philip? And how keep away? She winced every time that a list of names gave his and that other name for which, in spite of herself, she looked and must look. Here her own would have figured, and here. For her youth, she felt like a child who has been sent early to bed in a house where a party is taking place, and who hears distant music and voices; for the experience she had to her heritage, she felt like a criminal. What devil had entered into her? Her shoulder for Philip; the Bacchante's laugh over her shoulder for Beau! What seven devils?

So through the spring and the early summer, and the full summer, too, when the roses bloomed lavishly and the rhododendrons, for blossom, were monstrous posies, and every bed in the gardens was aflame with colour, and at morning and evening the birds sung their very hearts out

for the joy that was in them, Jezebel went as one maimed. Any who saw her must see, for she cared not who saw. Weston shook her head, and, having her "own idea," wondered whether the good, in fine, did wholly outbalance the evil. Mrs. Rumbold, with what she called "fatty regeneration of the yeart," was yet optimistic as ever. She who had held right was right, and would right itself somehow, declared that she would live to see the young mistress a youthful mother of babes — of babes crowing and comely — of babes well-liking and lusty as the babe that had caused all the blessed commotion. With fatty regeneration she said, let alone valv'lar complications, your days must be numbered; but, mark her words, she would live to see what she prophesied. Jezebel was made for happiness (this the contention of Rumbold) and would get it. So sturdy an infant (think of her, please, in her bath!) had never yet grown to an incomplete womanhood. It was n't in nature, and all would be well.

Spring, meanwhile, chastised Jezebel with whips; and summer, merciless and insisting, with scorpions. Strong as she was she must have suffered bodily ill but for one solace accorded her. A solace was granted her truly — the sight of the woe of her enemy.

Lady Malmsey's case "jumped to the eyes." Jezebel had not met her some half-dozen times without sense of it. There was woe if you would! There was disturbance, there perplexity, harassment, *bouleversement!* The world held one other as wretched as she. The words sang themselves in a sing-song refrain — Oh, as wretched as she! Oh, as wretched as she! The gods who devised the assuagement of Jezebel's pain understood human nature.

The case of Lady Malmsey, in truth, was past all concealing. It "jumped," as Jezebel said, to the eyes. It was "sorry," grievous, intolerable.

Thus were the two who loved Philip the unhappiest pair in the county. In June, when every one else was in

London and Broom shut, Flack, Ortolan, Weech, and the Hedge, they drove to Ettram, or Uncton, St. Eldreds, or Cattleford, with faces set to perpetual frowns, and black looks, when they met, for each other. No longer could either feign ignorance with the glance that you turn on a stranger. The curious comedy that had been played before Jezebel's excursion was being played afresh, but played differently. It began to be plain to Jezebel that, when she drove abroad, the thought of meeting her enemy — in the gate or otherwise — was a thought that was never absent from her mind. She would gaze down empty roads for the sight of the Malmsey roans and liveries, or the ponies which Philip's mother drove herself. Sometimes she would reject a long road for its emptiness. The direction of her drives began consciously to be influenced by the need that was in her of seeing unhappiness acute as her own. The sight of Lady Malmsey wearing a "But for you!" air of resentment, definite, deliberate, legible, was the reward that she asked for her pains. The degree of Lady Malmsey's woe was to be measured at a hungry and a satisfying glance. Her handsome face, Jezebel saw, would become lined if it was fixed to so settled an attitude of indignant despondency.

Warbeck was empty, apparently, — had been empty for weeks. Philip's mother drove always alone, lacking the heart for visitors, or shrinking, maybe, from the covert allusions, questionings, condolences, crowings, and what-not of comment of friends.

Jezebel was guessing, but could guess. "My good woman," she said under her breath when she had any stomach for the humour of the situation, which was seldom, and yet less seldom than one might suppose, "you have yourself to thank — only yourself." Oftener, however, seeing Lady Malmsey's case, she saw but her own the more plainly, and gave "But for you!" to her enemy's "But for you!"

So sped the days.

Ascot was over. The Baskervilles had had a house for the meeting, and Philip had been of their party. Jezebel knew the day when Lady Malmsey's papers told her that bit of news, and, if she had not felt like crying, could have laughed. She was glad she herself had not known it till the time was finished and done with. She was near the limit of what she could bear. . . .

June made way for July. The air was full of the smell of hay. In the meadows women raked and children played. It was a time of sunbonnets, red cotton handkerchiefs, poppies. The odd play proceeded. It could not be doubted that Lady Malmsey also manœuvred to compass the exchange of looks that was coming to be almost a thing of daily recurrence. Strange fetters of mutual antagonism held the two, binding the one to the other. Slaves chained in couples were not more inseparably linked each to each than these twain by the bands of their joint aversion and their common love. Something must come of these meetings. Jezebel knew it; Lady Malmsey knew it. There were moments like that which had preceded the battle of Peter and Skoal — the moment as of silence charged with menace. One or other would move, and — what then?

The hay was gathered in. In narrow lanes strands of it hung in the hedges and on the lower branches of the trees. Here and there a cornfield began to yellow. In another month the fields would be whitening to harvest.

It was not to be supposed that Lady Malmsey wanted for correspondents to tell her of Philip in London. We who have seen the inside of Warbeck may conjecture that Hugo's amused and satirical pen was not idle. It was his hour for laughter. Mary Anne of the Channel Islands had something to say, too, and others. Lady Malmsey, rest assured, was spared nothing, and hourly came nearer and yet more near to the point at which refraining would no longer be possible, and for her, as for the

psalmist, the fire would kindle and she at last speak with her tongue.

Jezebel, near her extremity, and on the rack, had thought herself at the ultimate stretch of her wretchedness when she learnt that the screw had been capable of one turn more. It was she, then, and not Weston, who was to carry a letter in her anguished pocket. Anthony Mundham confirmed her worst fears. He wrote vaguely, but in characters which stricken Jezebel running might read. It had been to see one, and not another — so much his letter told her, with an insistence that left her no loophole for escape from the self-accusations such knowledge must cause her — that Philip, back from contrite wanderings, had gone on that day of ill bode to the Abbey. What had occurred there, he who wrote did not know. Could she (who read) tell him? The issues of actions, and accidents even, were beyond human foreseeing, but had to be reckoned with sometimes. Philip was in a bad way, and that was the excuse that his friend, who in this was not in his confidence, had to make for his letter.

A postscript had an ingenuous air of frankness: —

"Can you suggest anything?" it said. "I know Philip through and through, and what his heart is in, and what it is not in. It is because it is not in his follies, and is so good a heart, that I venture to trouble you with its concerns."

Jezebel, that day and the next, went her way breathlessly. The letter scorched her pocket. She could not answer it.

"You wretch!" she said, apostrophizing its writer — "you wretch! Was n't I distracted before? Was n't I miserable enough?"

Too disturbed even to seek her strange solace, she kept to the park. It was cruel, for what could she do? To-morrow she would write, and when to-morrow came — to-morrow! Oh, wretch, to have told her! Oh, wretch,

thus to have rubbed salt into her wounds! As if she did n't know! As if the fear had not taken sleep from her eyes and spring from her gait! She read the letter again and again. A third day passed; others . . .

Lady Malmsey meanwhile sought her on the roads. (By this time the meetings were admittedly looked for daily.) Here was a day with no meeting. Here was another. A third. Insupportable! Lady Malmsey, at the mercy of a "crisis of nerves," said Hinton Dormoral to her footman. At Ettram, changing her mind, she said "Home!" Another day passed. At the end of a week she was desperate.

Again Lady Malmsey said the obnoxious word, and again retracted it.

But the day had to come when she did not retract it.

"How dare you?" said Jezebel, when she had heard her visitor's long charge. "How dare you?" But her eyes shone not wholly with anger.

"Is n't it true?" Lady Malmsey said. "Is n't it true?"

"Shall I tell you what is true?" Jezebel said, and without waiting for any permission said her little say out.

After that the two stood facing one another on each side of the hearth, where in the winter Jezebel and Philip had so stood face to face.

"I've done many foolish things," Jezebel said, speaking out of the silence — "two, at least, for which, if you made it possible for me, I 'd beg your pardon this minute — but one only in my life that I 'm ashamed of. I suppose in a way I 'm to blame for what you call Philip's entanglement. I shocked him deliberately. (Perhaps he is easily shocked!) I behaved horribly, anyway. I thought he was there to see — oh, what does it matter what I thought? I don't want to justify myself. Why should I to you, Lady Malmsey? I can't feel that I owe you any explanation."

She broke off.

"My son is taken from me," said Lady Malmsey. "I have cause against you. Goodness knows I have cause. It is your doing, however indirectly. It was about you that he and I had our first disagreement — years ago. His will had never clashed with mine before. By reason of you he and I are at odds at this moment. Do you know that it is six months since I, his mother, set eyes on him? When I think of that I can't bring myself to forgive you."

"I have n't asked your forgiveness, Lady Malmsey."

"You came between us," Lady Malmsey proceeded, ignoring Jezebel's disclaimer. "I had never had a moment's anxiety till then. If any one had told me that Philip could change as he has changed —"

"He has n't changed," said Jezebel; "he has been deceiving himself for a little while. In the end he won't be so much the worse for all this, though how in the meantime one's life's to be borne I can't tell! It is you who ought to know this, and not I. You trained him; you made him too sure. I — I could be glad if I was n't so wretched. You say I 'm to blame. If I am, it 's for not having married him. If I 'd married him, he 'd not be where he is. So far, I 'm responsible for what has happened — no further. Nay, even his asking me to marry him you brought upon yourself. What arguments you used with him to keep him from my dangerous influence at the Hunt Ball I don't know, and how you prevailed I don't know either — I have to put the thought of that away from me even now! — but Philip was ashamed of himself. You made him do what he was ashamed of, and if the result of that was to precipitate matters, you were to blame and not I. Were you grateful to me, I wonder?"

"I was surprised," Lady Malmsey said.

"At my having the 'spirit' to refuse him? Well, Lady Malmsey, I had, you see, so much self-respect. His mother had treated me as if I were a leper."

"That is saying too much," Lady Malmsey said.

"Is it?"

"We shall do no good by mutual recriminations," Lady Malmsey said. "Philip remains where he is while we talk. I — I don't know what I came for. I suppose, as I had n't seen you for so long, I thought you were ill."

"I am not ill, thank you, Lady Malmsey. But it was kind of you to think about me."

"You know," Lady Malmsey said hotly, "you know as well as I do that I have to think about you; you know as well as I do that I have looked out for you every day for these nine days. Nine days ago I saw you. I know to a moment when I saw you last."

"It was on Tuesday week," Jezebel said.

"Near the Cross at Uncton. The day before — Monday — I saw you in Cattleford. The day before that was Sunday. On the Saturday I had seen you at Ettram. On Friday I passed you near St. Eldreds. Have I thought of you, do you think? I'm a proud woman, Miss Dexter, and if you knew me you would know what it costs me to say what I 'm saying."

Jezebel waited.

"You have n't asked me to sit down," Lady Malmsey said.

"Oh, won't you?" Jezebel said; "and overlook my remissness!"

She drew a chair forward. In doing so she came near to Lady Malmsey, who caught her hand and looked into her face.

"How much I have disliked you," Lady Malmsey said, but spoke, it seemed, half to herself.

Jezebel smiled.

"I have n't liked you, I confess, Lady Malmsey," she said.

Lady Malmsey released the hand she held and sat down.

"You are outspoken for your years, Miss Dexter."

"Yes," Jezebel said. "I would not wish, however, to be disrespectful," she added.

Lady Malmsey's eye wandered round the room. It may have stirred memories.

"I knew your mother," she said, "rather well at one time. I was at her first dinner-party. She wore her wedding-dress I remember, and sang 'Rose of the Garden.' She had a sweet voice. She was a timid woman looking, I think, for encouragement, and was much alone . . ."

"She did not understand my father," said Jezebel.

"Maybe not," Lady Malmsey said. "We are all liable to misunderstand each other — you, I, all of us. 'Rose of the Garden,' she sang, 'Blushing and gay.' You don't help me, Miss Dexter."

"Help you?" said Jezebel.

"I may have been harsh in some of my judgements."

"I loved my father," said Jezebel.

"Apply what I am saying to him also. But I see you won't help me . . ."

"Help you?" said Jezebel again. "Help you?"

"Philip's at stake," Philip's mother said desperately. "I don't know why I came. Not for this, I believe. But Philip's at stake. What are all the pride, and all the eating of all the humble pie in the world against that?" She paused. "Do you care for him?" she asked abruptly. "You're inscrutable. Answer me! Do you, Jezebel Dexter, care for my son?"

"Yes," Jezebel answered, without hesitation.

"Could you — could you get him away from her?"

"I think so," said Jezebel.

Lady Malmsey had burst out with: —

"Then, for Heaven's sake, do! I ask it. I beg it!" and had got in her agitation to: "Would your aunt see me, do you think?" when something in Jezebel's face pulled her up.

"Oh!" she said, "oh, how I am forgetting. Can you —

can you bring yourself, if you forgive either of us, to forgive him . . .? Can you, can you?"

So came Warbeck to Hinton Dormoral. So was it reprehensible Jezebel who went forth to rescue (and rescued) exemplary Philip; and so was it that, a daughter being born of the marriage (and the worshipping Philip, in some things, being adamant), Jezebel's name took its place as a family name in the lines of the irreproachable Malmseys.

THE END

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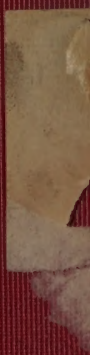
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